AN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY USING HALLUCINOGENS IN 1970

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Philosophy
Columbia University
1975

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ABSTRACT

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This is a case study, based on personal observation, of a group of young Americans who used hallucinogenic experience to create a religious community. It begins by surveying anthropological, historical, and ethnobotanical studies, which document an association between religion and drugs, and by reviewing a recent debate among scholars of religion concerning the religious authenticity of hallucinogenic experiences. On the basis of these, I construct an ideal-type model of the dialectical relationship between the hallucinogenic experience and religious communal development. This theoretical model suggests a decline in drug usage as religious development occurs. Next I present a portrait of this community, Stephen and the Monday Night Class, focusing my description and interpretation on the symbolic forms and social means they used to construct their religious community. I conclude that there is an observable decline in their drug usage and that it does arise out of the social dynamics of their religious development. I then discuss the social and cultural sources in American society, which a sociological analysis suggests, are the plausible reasons that a group of young Americans would use hallucinogenic experience to construct a religious life today.

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INTRODUCTION

There were personal, cultural, theoretical, and methodological reasons why it occurred to me in the fall of 1967 to begin the research that led to the following study. Up to that time I had spent all of my young adult life in and around universities as student, teacher and campus minister. Exhausted by the ordinary round of classes, books, papers and university persons, I sought a dissertation project that would take me beyond the walls of the scholarly community. I wanted to be with people who were being religious rather than studying religion.

At that particular moment the psychedelic drug movement was a subject of wide but uneven discussion in all the popular mass media. Many of the visible leaders, such as Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, made specific religious claims for their drug experience and this social movement. These claims were disputed in the popular media and debated in scholarly circles. After exploratory discussions with graduate student friends and my professors, I decided to do field research on young people in this general psychedelic drug movement who were organizing religious communities.

By studying these new religious groups I planned to explore three theoretical concerns in social theory about religion. Generally, scholars of religion placed special importance on the early phases in a religious group's development. Choosing to study the religious usage of psychedelic drugs would allow me to study the early develop-

ment of a religious movement in the U.S.A. Second, another issue usually given theoretical emphasis is the relational dynamics between religious experience and behavior. I was particularly interested in the role played by the symbolic elaboration of religious experience for structuring actual behavior. The psychedelic phenomenon was a dramatic psychological experience, producing behavioral changes and symbolic creativity among the drug users. Third, at the present time the philosophical, historical and literary approaches for understanding religious behavior dominate the field of religious studies. In my study I wished to correct the scholarly neglect and even disdain for contemporary religious movements of untested worth. I wished to "dirty my hands" by studying a not yet legitimated religious movement.

My theoretical perspective on the empirical study of religion is strongly shaped by the writing of Professors Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.[1] Their continuing stress on a dialectical shift in any analysis of social behavior makes clear the equal significance of the "insides" (emotional experiences, ethical attitudes, and mental ideas (i.e. self)), and the "outsides" (behavior, community life, and ritual gestures (i.e. society)) in the social construction of religious life. I set out in my research to describe and to analyze this fundamental social reciprocity in a religious movement using hallucinogenic drugs.

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[1] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968).

3 Therefore, in the description and analysis that follows there is a bi-polar focus in my discussion. I began research concentrating attention on the relationship between the qualities of an hallucinogenic drug experience (its subjective character) and religion as a symbollic picture of the ultimate reality (its belief-structure). My original question was "can a hallucinogenic drug experience be an authentic religious experience for some people in the U.S.A. today?" This remains one of the presuppositional issues to be discussed and resolved if one is to study such drug usage and a community growing together from their common experience with hallucinogens as a case of the religious construction of social reality. In Chapter one I resolve this issue at the theoretical level by an examination of a debate on this matter among certain scholars and a survey of certain relevant research reports on the usage of naturally occurring hallucinogenic substances by peoples from many different cultural regions and in different historical situations. With criteria derived from this analysis in Chapter Two, I provide evidence that the particular community I studied is in this theoretical viewpoint a case of the religious construction of their social reality in which their hallucinogenic experience played a decisive role.

However, the major thrust of this research report shifts dialectically to the other side of this reciprocity to describe and to analyze the social construction of their religious reality. There were two major reasons for this shift arising out of the actual research process. The analytic reason suggested itself as I finished the background research reported in Chapter One, and discovered

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that despite evidences of extensive association between hallucinogen usage and religion in many different cultural and historical situations, no major religious movement that has socially transcended a particular national or tribal group continues hallucinogenic usage as a central aspect of their religious life. This lead to a reversal of my original question; I asked "why does such religious drug usage disappear as a religious movement grows more complex in its social relationships?" At the end of Chapter One, I offer my own hypothesis in the form of an "ideal-type" model analytically describing and relating certain elements in religious drug usage that could lead away from the hallucinogenic experience itself in the social construction of a religious movement. Furthermore, sheer opportunity in my field research with this particular community provide me with the second reason for shifting my attention. During the time (1970) that I observed them, both external challenges to the illegality of their drug usage and internal transformations in their life together raised the question of their continuing hallucinogenic usage as part of their religious development. The ways in which this discussion was conducted and the resolution of the issue they achieved for themselves provide me with a direct opportunity to measure my hypothetically constructed model of the decline of hallucinogenic usage against their actual social behavior and symbollic understanding of religious drug usage. This actual social change in their behavior became the critical focus of my research and analysis reported in Chapter Three.

In the concluding chapter I engage in continuing expost facto analysis of this case. First, Neil Smelser's Theory of Collective

Behavior provided me with a means of relating these external social factors to the inner social developments of this actual case.[1] Using his "value-added" approach to a step-by-step intellectual reconstruction of the phases in this community's emergence as an example of a collective behavior response to disorganizing elements in their social environment. Also it provided me with a concrete means for completing the analytic description of the reciprocity between the "insides" (i.e. the hallucinogenic experience) and the "outsides" (i.e. this religious community) in this case study. Then I set them and their experience within the larger social framework of drug use and misuse in the U.S.A. today. This enables me to offer a plausible explanation of their emergence as a religious community using hallucinogens at this place and time in American history.

Methodologically, I wanted to do field research as a participant observer. I felt the paucity of descriptive accounts of what was happening right now in American religion. Sociologists studying American religious movements are so enamoured with sophisticated statistical procedures for "proving" their hypotheses that their reports remain unconvincing as documentation of actual religious behavior. Anthropologists produce more vivid accounts but usually not of American religious behavior, except the Native Americans. I wanted to capture a "portrait" of a living example of religious behavior in its social setting using principally my own observations,

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[1] Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1962).

documented by notetaking, tape-recording, and photography. The psychedelic drug movement was a likely field for such research.

My age and immediate background in campus ministry convinced me that I could move within this predominantly young subculture without great disruption in the young or myself. I could make an original contribution by reporting on phenomena where older, more established social researchers could not go as easily. Also, I hoped that these field research experiences would overcome some of my own biases. They might be compelling enough to raise theoretical issues in a fresh way for me.

Field research methods often are best for initial "pilot" studies where little social research has been done. In 1967 I could find no other actual descriptions of new religious groups using psychedelic drugs among American middle-class young persons. Since I began my own study there have been some general sociological studies and analyses, but I still have not found a study of a religious community using these substances.

Field research suited my present training and methodological abilities, too. It was appropriate for a person trained primarily in religious phenomena but only in an introductory manner in sociological or anthropological data-gathering methods. My research strengths were in the number of religious traditions I had studied and in the critical attunement of my own religious sensibility. In other words, I was interested in religious experience and behavior in their own genesis, shape and content. With empathy I could enter into another religious perspective without either losing my scholarly objectivity or failing to take that perspective seriously as a genuine human quest after ultimate meaning.

Participant observation suggested itself as the appropriate, if not indeed, the only possible, approach for meeting three objectives in my research plan. First, I wished to do a description of a religious community that would make sense of its own participants, while yet also moving beyond their own understanding to display the usefulness of Berger and Luckmann's dialectical perspective for describing an actual case of the social construction of religious behavior. This meant I had to focus on the everyday language and behavior of a religious groups who were available for frequent observation by me. Professor Severyn T. Bruyn suggests the phenomenological richness needed and participant observation as an appropriate procedure when he said: "The observer must move within the framework of the people who are the subjects of study, and then develop a vocabulary which begins within their perspective, subsequently moving on to points beyond, but linked ot it."[1] To "move within the framework of the people" was my initial attempt to overcome the usual reductionism of the social scientific study of religion without losing my intellectual capacity later for "moving on to points beyond, but linked to it."

Second, I had developed already an ideal-type model which proposed certain relationships among religious drug usage, symbollic beliefs and the social construction of religious community. This was still a very general analysis of possible relationships which

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[1]Severyn T. Bruyn, The Human Perspective in Sociology: the Methodology of Participant Observation (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966). 69.

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I wish to explore their relevance for explaining actual religious behavior by the close examination of a specific case of religious drug usage. As a theory this ideal-type model was far too imprecise to suggest a way to rigorously operationalize its propositions and to comparatively seek many cases for testing its hypotheses in a highly controlled scientific manner. I needed to evaluate its plausibility and its capability for ordering the experience of one case first.

Third, participation observation would allow me the opportunity to search for an ideal case of positive, self-conscious and sustained religious usage of hallucinogens in the U.S.A. today. Initially I looked for several, but finally because of the flexibility of this approach to my task I was able to focus my study on what seemed an ideal instance of the kind of religious behavior I was seeking to examine. This clearly suggests the limits of my own study, yet I believe it is also its strength, for this final choice of single-minded attention on one religious community allowed me to create an analytic description of religious drug usage based on this ideal-type model. As McCall and Simmons say in their book on participant observation as a form of social research" "An analytic description is primarily an empirical application and modification of scientific theory rather than an efficient and powerful test of such a theory, since only one case--however complex--is involved in the study." [1]

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[1] George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons (eds.), Issues in Participant Observation: a Test and Reader (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 3.

By focusing on the relationship of their religious drug usage to the social construction of their religious community I have been able to accept the initial challenge to take seriously what the subjects themselves take most seriously and yet also to move beyond their framework to a general theoretical perspective constructed to account for a case of religious usage of hallucinogens. To carry on theoretical analysis in this comprehensive and yet initial way gained for me the phenomenological richness and immediate immersion in the everyday world of religious life which only participant observation can fully provide.

After 1965, San Francisco, California became the geographical and spiritual center of the psychedelic drug movement. The search for examples of religious drug usage drew me naturally to that field site. In January 1969 I accepted a field staff position with the Board for Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ with the understanding that they would support my research on psychedelic drug usage by the young as part of my duties. Professor Walter Huston Clarke in Cambridge, Massachusetts assisted my research by giving me several contacts, including Dr. Timothy Leary, for my first visit to San Francisco.

In March 1969 on our first visit to the Bay region, Nancy, my wife, and I spent a leisurely Sunday afternoon with Dr. Leary and his wife, Rosemary, at their home in Berkeley. He shared with us his hopes for a cultural transformation of America by the young who had experienced the psychedelic drug vision. He suggested some drug-using communities that I might contact for my study. I spent the next three weeks getting to know the "hip" subculture and its

activities, heroes, and communal institutions. The Glide Methodist Church played a special role in relating the hip community to the more established community of San Francisco. Its staff gave me an initial orientation to the social, behavioral, and religious patterns of hip life. By the time I left the area, I was fully persuaded that this would be a fruitful site for future research.

We returned later that same year in August for a month-long stay. Two events characterize this period of research. We attended a week-end conference on "Psychotherapy and LSD" at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. Dr. Leary was one of many speakers at this meeting. Scientists, doctors, psychedelic drug users, and others debated the safety and wisdom of the growing drug usage among young Americans. The vigor of the exchange and the divergent views of the LSD experience persuaded me that if I were to do field research among psychedelic drug users, I would have to risk this experience myself at least once. A few weeks later, through trusted friends, Nancy and I took an "acid trip" under the guidance of an experienced user and in a manner considered natural by the his sub-culture. It was an overwhelming psychological experience with negative and positive aspects of exhilaration and finally exhaustion. This single experience made me empathetically aware of the subjective power with which those I studied were living. It was a "shaking of the foundations" of a person's self-identity and cultural definitions.

During the Fall of 1969, I visited with the late Dr. Walter Pahnke in Baltimore, Maryland. He was a psychiatrist and an historian of religion who had done experimental research on the questions of psychedelic experiences and religious mysticism. From my account, Dr. Pahnke verified the authenticity of the dosage used in my

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LSD experience and administered a brief test for determining whether my experience would be rated as "mystical." My experience, as tested by Dr. Pahnke's scale, did not measure up to mysticism. However, my wife's experience did rate as a "mystical" one. Dr. Pahnke told me he knew of no other field research on drug-using religious communities among young Americans. He encouraged my plans and gave me specific advice on doing research in a drug-using population.

Early in 1970 we set up residence for five months in the San Francisco Bay area. From February through May, I explored several contacts with drug-using communities, but their reticence or lack of a central religious focus in their psychedelic drug usage discouraged me from pursuing these leads. On the other hand, early in February through a Drug Conference at the Glide Memorial Methodist Church, I met Stephen and his family and visited one of his Monday night classes. From the first encounter I recognized the religiosity of this community and also the obvious impact of the psychedelic experience in their lives. After attending several other meetings in March, April, and May, I decided to focus my remaining field research on this community and its leader. In informed them of my research project, and they agreed to accept my work and provided me with tapes and transcripts of Stephen's lectures.

During May and June 1970 I observed this group's activities two or three times a week. In June I also had some private interviews with Stephen and the Family. Each Monday evening from eight o'clock until approximately midnight, Stephen held his regular class at the Family Dog, a rock and roll ballroom located in the amusement area on the ocean beachfront in San Francisco. Attendance at these Monday classes averaged about one thousand persons. I also attended

their Sunday meeting at sunrise in Sutro Park on the hill behind the Family Dog ballroom. This meeting had one hundred fifty of the core students in attendance. In addition to the weekly meetings, I was present at several special occasions in June. Stephen once held a Friday afternoon meeting in Golden Gate Park. There was a large Sunday meeting of "holy men", the "One Festival," in which he participated along with other religious leaders in the hip subculture. I spent an afternoon with them at a rural commune near Santa Rosa, California. One evening Nancy and I ate supper with Stephen and his family in their converted school bus home and we talked for several hours.

By the end of June, Stephen had begun to develop plans for meeting with people in other parts of the United States. Earlier in June he had accepted an invitation from a church group working within the hip subculture in Kansas City, Missouri to come and to speak to them. Also, with several of his students, he had edited transcripts of some Monday night classes for a private printing of a book. Favorable responses to these initial endeavors encouraged their plans to travel. As a result, I had two other opportunities for observing this community in social settings outside of San Francisco.

At the end of June, we moved to Ann Arbor where I was to work at the University of Michigan. In July, I traveled to Boulder, Colorado for the "Boulder Whole Earth Fair" where Stephen, along with other holy men popular in the hip subculture, was to speak, teach, and counsel. This week-long "Fair" provided me with many intimate interactions with Stephen, the Family, and other core members of the Monday Night Class. I documented their words and activities, using notebook, tape recorder, and camera.

By the end of this week I heard of their travel plans for the Fall of 1970 which would take them across the United States. I invited them to visit Ann Arbor and they agreed. Their visit to Ann Arbor in November 1970, for a week of speaking and teaching, provided me with a period of intense contact and encounter with this group. By this time they had become a Caravan of fifty converted buses, trucks, and cars, and a traveling community of nearly two hundred and fifty men, women, and children. The visit to Ann Arbor ended on a Saturday morning when Stephen, his Family, and some of his students blamed me for some low-grade marihuana they had just purchased. They reasoned that, since I was the "connection" for their visit to Ann Arbor, they had been "burnt" for my lack of spiritual correctness. Stephen felt I should not do my study on him, but instead should quit my job, sell all my possessions, buy a school bus, and join them on the Caravan. I refused, and he vowed no further aid to me in my study of his group.

Since then I have received only indirect reports on their progress. I have also collected considerable published materials about them. Newspapers have reported on their travels as the Caravan and on their decision to settle in Tennessee on a large farm. Several magazines have published interviews with Stephen. The community has published two books of Stephen's transcribed lectures. From time to time over the past three years (1971 - 1974), newspaper stories have reported their legal tests in state and federal courts to obtain the right to use marihuana as a religious sacrament.

My most recent opportunity to observe Stephen occurred in November 1972, when he returned to Ann Arbor for two days on a tour of colleges with a rock and roll band that he and his students had

organized. Although I attended their public meetings, listened to their music, heard Stephen teach, and saw a slide show about their farming community, I did not speak directly with Stephen.

In all, I had thirty-six encounters with this group, lasting from two to ten hours each. They were spread over a period of almost three years, from February 1970 to November 1972. There were three periods of intense encounter and frequent observations: two months in San Francisco (May and June 1970), one week in Boulder, Colorado (July 1970), and one week in Ann Arbor, Michigan (November 1970).

I compiled a record of my observations in field notes, took approximately three hundred color slides and fifty black and white photographs, and recorded twenty-seven hours of audio tapes. In addition, I received copies of transcribed notes and edited transcripts of some of Stephen's lectures from October 1968 through March 1970. Also, I obtained audio tapes of Monday night classes from October 1969 through June 15, 1970. Besides the two published books of lectures mentioned above, I had access to other published material, including several magazine and newspaper articles and interviews, dating from October 1969 to the present.

During my field research on this community, I was unable to systematically gather information from the participants on their social, educational, and economic background. They were reticent to volunteer this information directly to me in interviews because these matters took them away from their religious commitment to focus their attention in the present. Nevertheless, often they volunteered this information as an illustration in support of their present understandings, so that I did develop a strong impressionistic picture of the case members immediate background situation.

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The strength of this impression grew over time as I listened to various stories and became aware of the unanimity of their immediate background in institutions of higher education.

The socio-demographic picture of the community participants closely associated with its leader was:

1. sexual gender: there seemed to be an equal number of males and females. There was not the obvious numerical dominance of either that is observed in many religious communities.

2. age: although the range was great in the actual Monday Night Class meetings in San Francisco, the age range of the core participants clustered in young adult area from 20 to 35, with a strong impression that this average age was around 25 years old. There were several small children under school age, and many births were occurring among the married core participants. There were a few people of mature age above fifty years old and none of these were central in the decision-making of the community.

3. marital status: there were many unmarried young participants in the community. Marriage was highly valued, so that the core participants were mostly married, some of them in group-marriages like Stephen and his family. A few had been divorced. All participants seemed to have had extensive sexual experience, and although promiscuous sexual relationships were not encouraged, continuing sexual activity arriving out of friendships were not discouraged. Sexual exclusiveness was expected within married couples or group marriages.

4. school background: the core participants had almost all spent extensive time in college or university. Many, if not most, appeared to have achieved bachelor degrees; several had master degrees.

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I met none who had a doctoral degree. They were all quite critical of their higher education experience especially in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. There was approval of those practical skills learned in mechanics and engineering.

5. economic background: the strong impression from all contacts with the community participants was that they were mostly from middle-class to upper-middle class economic background. Their few parents I received information about were professional persons. They rejected these middle-class economic aspirations completely and now sought to live at an income level of basic subsistence. Being vegetarians and living in school buses, trucks, and inexpensive urban apartments or rural farms, they were able to subsist on little actual monetary income, while in the San Francisco area some lived on public welfare financial subsidies, but Stephen forbade this when the Caravan left that area.

The continuing overall impression of the socio-demographic character of the community's participants was that of "drop-outs" from the higher education institutions. They seemed very much like the "non-student" population that has appeared in many university towns and cities.

What follows then in four chapters is the report and analysis of my research. Chapter One is a discussion of the "theoretical perspective" that guided my field research and its later analysis. In this chapter I define my central terms and establish two basic questions for discussion and analysis.

In Chapters Two and Three I present Stephen and the Monday Night Class as a case of religious drug usage among young Americans in the 1970s. These chapters report how they do their religion in their own terms but ordered by my analytical questions and concerns. The result is a "portrait" of this community's life and not a "photograph".

Finally, Chapter Four is an analysis of this case, including a discussion of certain theoretical issues in the social theory of drugs and religion and some general remarks suggested by this case about the American spiritual situation.

I do not make undue claims to have exhaustively analyzed the phenomena reported, let alone those experienced, nor the theoretical issues raised. It remains an initial study of the impact of psychedelic drugs on young Americans and their religious behavior beginning in the 1960s. I do conclude, however, that Stephen and the Monday Night Class are an example of a religious usage of psychedelic drugs, and I recommend other similar studies if we are to understand religious behavior in America in the late Twentieth Century.

CHAPTER I

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DRUGS AND RELIGION

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a social theory concerned with explicating the interaction of hallucinogenic drugs and religion. From this theoretical perspective I propose an "ideal-type" model for describing and analyzing religious drug usage. In subsequent chapters the adequacy of this model is tested through the reporting of field research in a new religious community in 1970.

This study is divided into three sections. The first, and longest, is a description of the available historical, anthropological and ethnobotanical data on natural plant sources of hallucinogens. This brief survey is not exhaustive, especially in the historical field. It is representative of what is presently knowable without intensive research in specialized areas. Beyond describing the general characteristics of the human use of hallucinogens, I concentrate on documenting their association with religions. Within the limited scope of this study no attempt is made at the fascinating but difficult task of outlining a history of religious drug usage. Instead, by surveying a limited amount of data intensively, I seek: (1) to establish an historical association between religions and hallucinogens, (2) to show this association is geographically widespread, and (3) to review the research on a few cases suggestive of a social theory useful in contemporary research.

In the next section I examine the theoretical debate among scholars of religion over the proper analysis of hallucinogens in

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relation to mystical experience. Then the third section brings the data of the first into contact with the theoretical debate of the second, so that I may suggest a theoretical perspective for ordering reflection and research on this matter.

Definitions in the study of drugs are notoriously ambiguous. What is a drug? Ethnopharmacologists do not go beyond saying--a drug is any physical substance outside of food taken by humans for its supposed physiological or psychological effect. Then what is an hallucinogenic drug? Instead of an answer to this question we find terminological proliferation.[1] The most general term is "psychoactive", i.e. a subjective change is experienced by the user. "Psychoenergizer" is more positive, i.e. produces greater mental activity. "Narcotic" is the oldest term associated with these drugs, but is generally considered clinically inaccurate in relation to hallucinogens, because it means to benumb the senses, and to produce physiological addiction. Neither effect is found in this family of drugs. Early psychiatric research coined the term "psychotomimetic," i.e. a subjective state like a psychosis. Current theory and research suggest this is an inaccurate definition for this drug action. Recently, "psychotropic," i.e. a mind-changing drug has become popular in medical circles. It is accurate but covers a large family of drugs. "Psychedelic" was first suggested by medical researchers because of the "mind-manifesting"

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[1]The exact wording of these definitions for various drug terminology is mine, but follows standard usage in the field. See Richard R. Lingeman, Drugs from A to Z: A Dictionary (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969).

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properties of these drugs. It remains the preferred term in much of the drug-using subculture of the United States, although they prefer it to mean "consciousness-expanding." In this chapter I have elected to use "hallucinogenic" (adjective) and "hallucinogen" (noun) with reservations for it means "to produce a hallucinatory experience." Many medical researchers and social scientists dispute this characterization of the subjective drug effect, primarily because most subjects using these drugs are clearly aware that their experience is a drug effect. The classic definition of psychotic hallucination, however, turns precisely on the subject's inability to distinguish between his normal reality and these fantasies. Nevertheless, I chose this term because its use is limited to these particular drug substances, it has a widespread usage and its meaning points precisely at the visionary experience. In later chapters I follow the subjects' preference by using "psychedelic."

Another limitation in this chapter is the focus upon natural sources of hallucinogens, which excludes the expanding number of synthetic hallucinogens (e.g. LSD, psilocybin, Mescaline, DMT). These were only recently synthesized, either from some natural source or by chemical process, and, therefore, could have no relevance to the historical development of religion. The natural substances covered in this study have the same general subjective effect as the more powerful synthetics of later origin. It is this subjective effect, usually called a visionary experience by a drug user, that is the phenomenological link for the historical association of hallucinogens and religions. It is this effect which appears central to those who use it for religious purposes; it is this effect that is histori-

cally the most ancient in human memory of these substances; finally it is this effect that is problematic for people in all ages.

> The use of plants or their extracts for medicinal or religious ceremonial purposes is very old--practically as old as the human race. The earliest information about the use of plants as psychotropic agents by man is probably found in the Bible. The apple that Adam ate (whatever the variety) could be considered as a psycho-energizer. Was it a stimulant, did it enhance memory or learning abilities, or did it activate the desire for acquiring more information? As with our new psychotropic drugs, I don't know if it brought happiness and comfort, or new problems, aggravations, and unhappiness.[1]

When Eve ate the apple, was there a cultural crisis in the garden?

Historical, Anthropological, and Ethnobotanical Data

Herein is a summary of the available information on fifteen plant substances, thirteen of which have hallucinogens in them.[2] This list is representative of the major families of hallucinogens that have an historical association with religions. Also I have summarized some of the scholarly speculations about ancient Indo-Aryan and ancient Greek

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[1] Daniel H. Efron, ed., Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychoactive Drugs, Public Health Service Publication no. 1645 (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), ix.

[2] Two excellent collections of anthropological field reports on the ritual use of hallucinogens have been published since I completed this background study. These studies offer further documentation of the widespread and long-term association between religion and these substances. See Peter T. Furst, ed., Flesh of the Gods: the Ritual Use of Hallucinogens (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972) and Michael J. Harner, ed., Hallucinogens and Shamanism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

religious drug usage. Concluding this presentation is a brief review of current psychological and medical theories about non-drug physical means used for altering states of human consciousness. The section closes with an analysis of the trends in these data that have particular relevance for understanding religious phenomena.

South American snuffs[1]

Besides the widespread usage of tobacco in snuff as a crude means of intoxication, South American Indians make snuffs from two plant families in which hallucinogenic alkaloids are present. Most commonly used are plants from the Piptadenia species, including E. perigrina, P. colubrina and P. macrocarpa. Indians from the Andes across northern South America and throughout the Caribbean islands make snuff from these plants. It variously is called: cohoba, nipo, yopo, vilca, hilca, or cebil. Its active hallucinogen is Bufotenine, and recently analysis has suggested the presence of DMT (i.e. N. N-dimethyltryptamine). The other plant family used by the Indians to produce these snuffs is the Virola species. Called by its native users: yakee, parica, or epena, it is known to contain a tryptamine alkaloid. Researchers at work on these South American snuffs believe other hallucinogenic substances will probably be discovered.

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[1]Richard Blum, et.al., Society and Drugs (2 vols.; San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), I, 88-89; Richard E. Schultes, "The Botanical Origins of South American Snuffs," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 291-306; Richard E. Schultes, "Botanical Sources of the New World Narcotics," The Psychedelic Review, I (Fall, 1963), 158, 163-165; S. Henry Wassen, "Anthropological Survey of the Use of South American Snuffs," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 233-382.

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From tribe to tribe these snuffs play different cultural roles. Sometimes a whole tribe uses snuff in communal celebration, moving from increased friendliness, to dancing with religious fervor, to a general frenzy, and then finally into a corporate stupor. The tribal shamans use snuff in large amounts to produce a convulsive sleep. In the midst of this sleep the shaman shouts out his dreams and images for later interpretation. This dream material is used especially for healing diagnosis and divination. Such users report vivid colorful hallucinations. Among the preliterate Waika tribe in Brazil snuff is used in a spiritual puberty rite. When a father decides his son is ready, he gives him "epena" so that the son may see the "Hakula," the large mountain men. The hallucinogenic snuff makes one large enough to see and to communicate with the Hakula.

The earliest documentary evidence of the religious use of these snuffs in the New World was Columbus' accounts of a "cemi" ceremony among the West Indians. Religious ceremonial paraphernalia for snuff have been found in the highlands of Peru and dated as early as 1200 B.C. Consequently, the religious usage of snuff must have preceded the rising of Inca civilization. During the sixteenth century Spanish conquest of Peru this snuff was found to be in personal or private usage by the Inca priests or native shamans for divinatory purposes, but it did not play a central role in the formal religion of the Incas.

Banisteriopsis caapi[1]

Northwest Amazonia and the Andes are also the locale for a powerful hallucinogenic drink called by the Indians either: yage, ayahuasca, or caapi. This drink is made from plants of the Banisteriopsis species, including B. caapi, B. inebrians, B. rusbyana, and B. quitensis. Other ingredients are used by various tribes in combination with these, but ethnobotanical research to date suggest that the Banisteriopsis plants are the source for the hallucinogenic alkaloids. Three alkaloids have been identified: harmine, harmaline and d-tetrahydroharmine.

Harmaline, when synthesized and used experimentally, produces a powerful hallucinogenic effect, both in terms of the quantity and the realistic quality of its images. Researchers have also experimentally verified the traditional Indian description of this dreaming state as including lethargy, immobility, closed eyes and general withdrawal from the environmental processes and a great activation of fantasy. The cultural functions of this drink are similar to those of the snuffs. "The Natema Feast" has been identified by some anthropological observers as a week-long period of drug-induced dreaming activity for many of the tribes people. Such communal activities are not rare, but even more often the shaman uses this hallucinogenic beverage to diagnose illness or to divine the future. In Colombia, in the "yurupari"

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[1]Louis Lewin, Phantastica: Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs, trans. by P.H.A. Wirth (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1964), 140-144; Claudio Naranjo, "Psychotropic Properties of the Harmala Alkaloids," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 385-402; Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 147-153.

whipping ceremony, caapi is given to boys to fortify them for the violence of their puberty rite. This involves three or four days of whipping each other into physical exhaustion. None of the scholars examined mention any historical role of importance for this drink in earlier South American civilizations.

Mimosa hostilis[1]

The Pancaru Indians of Brazil prepare a hallucinogenic beverage, "vinho de jurymena," from the seeds of the Mimosa hostilia. It is believed by the Indians to transport their souls into the spirit world, and it is used by them in their religious ceremonies and for magical purposes. The active principle of this beverage is DMT.

Erthroxylon coca[2]

About ninety percent of the contemporary Andean Indian population chews coca leaves and lime ashes. They use it as a stimulant and appetite-depressant to overcome fatigue that easily occurs at high mountainous altitudes. Probably it is second only to tobacco

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[1] Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 162-163; Richard E. Schultes, "The Place of Ethnobotany in the Enthopharmacologic Search for Psychotomimetic Drugs," in Enthopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 41-42.

[2] Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 88; Lingeman, Drugs from A to Z 43-44; Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 165-166; Norman Taylor, Narcotics: Nature's Dangerous Gifts (New York: Dell, 1966), 59-72.

among the peoples of South America in its geographic spread and continuity of its usage. Cocaine is its synthesized active principle, and except in extremely large dosage it is a central nervous system stimulant rather than a hallucinogen.

Dried coca leaves were found in Peruvian Burial urns over two thousand years old. The plant is known by the natives as "The Divine Plant of the Incas." Its early usage was probably restricted to the priests, who may have burned the leaves and inhaled them during their ceremonies. By the time of the Spanish Conquest all the Peruvians were chewing it with lime ash, for what must have seemed its magical ability to overcome fatigue. The golden emblems of coca leaves stood at the center of Inca worship. They were deemed so sacred that the Inca would not reveal their hiding place despite torture at the hands of his Spanish conquerors. The impact of this plant and its veneration among the Incas are reflected in the old Peruvian saying that "God is a substance."

Salvia diviorum[1]

Recently the hallucinogenic properties of this member of the mint (Labiatae) family were discovered by field researchers among the Mazatec Indians of Mexico. The leaves are chewed or ground up and soaked in water to make a drink. The active principle of this plant has not yet been identified. Field reports indicate that it is a short duration hallucinogen. Speculation is that this plant may be the same as the Aztecs' "pipiltzintzinth." The Indians use it for

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[1]Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 158; Schultes," Place of Ethnobotany," 43.

visions only when they do not have access to more powerful hallucinogenic plants.

Morning Glory seeds[1]

Two different members of the Convolvulaceae plant family are hallucinogens--Ipomoea violacea and Rivea corymbosa. The Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico use these hallucinogenic seeds for various magico-religious purposes. The active principles have been analyzed as d-isolysergic amide, chanoclavine, and clymoclavine. Most investigators believe these plants are the same as the Aztecs' "Tlitlittzen" and "Ololiuqui." Early records by Spanish priests and doctors at the time of the conquest describe these as powerful drugs used by the Aztecs for divination or communication with their gods or as an ointment for making them fearless.

Betel Nut[2]

Betel chewing is as widespread among the Indians on the islands of East Indies as coca leaves chewing is in the Andes. This process has three ingredients: a palm nut from the Areca catechu tree, a vine leaf from the Piper betle, and a pinch of lime. The active principle is arecoline, but this is a stimulant not a hallucinogen. Betel chewing is a tradition to which the Indians are devoted. Honor is given

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[1] Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 155-156; Taylor, Narcotics, 132-136; R. Gordon Wasson, "The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico," The Psychedelic Review, I (Summer, 1963), 37-38.

[2] Taylor, Narcotics, 171-172; Wassen, "South American Snuffs," 286.

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to those people whose mouth has become disfigured by the black deposits of lime. Nowhere is this plant presently worshipped. Some anthropologists believe this practice of chewing a leaf may be a survival in both the New and the Old Worlds of a ritual practice from Palaeolithic times. The technique involved in coca chewing and betel chewing is complicated enough to suggest a long association with humankind.

Piper methysticum[1]

"Kava" is a drink made from the roots of the Piper methysticum by the natives of the South Sea Islands. Two major processes for preparation are observed. In Fiji and in Samoa the dried roots are ground into a pulp and strained for the extract which is then mixed with water and heated. In Tongariki young men and women chew fresh green roots, expectorate the pulp, and then mix it with water and heat it. Although the active principle of this plant is not known, the premastication of green roots increases the sedative effect.

The kava ritual is clearly of early religious origin. There are mythical accounts of its creation and it is often ascribed to the local island diety. Originally kava was restricted to priests and to their religious ceremonies. Now in both Fiji and Samoa it is a socio-political ritual under the control of the island's political leadership.

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[1]Mary Barnard, The Mythmakers (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966), 15, 19, 23. Clellan Ford, "Ethnographical Aspects of Kava," in Ethnogpharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 162-173; Carleton Gajdusek, "Recent Observations on the Use of Kava in the New Hebrides," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 119-125; Lowell D. Holmes, "The Function of Kava in Modern Samoan Culture," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 107-118.

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Every detail of its usage, from preparation to the final drink, is prescribed with great concern for social etiquette. This ritual is observed at all the "rites of passage" in the life-cycle from birth to death. It is called upon for many social occasions, especially with visiting dignitaries. In Samoa and Fiji, however, libations to the gods, ritual prayers, and some use for healing are associated with the kava ceremony. On the other hand, there is no quest for visions or for contact with the spirit world.

In Tongariki, where the stronger drug effect has been noted by visiting anthropologists, a return to popularity of the kava ceremony is related to an anti-christian missionary cargo cult. This nativistic religious movement reinstituted the kava ceremony as a daily activity for the men. Field reports describe the drug effect as a strong sedative relaxant, accompanied by a numbness in the extremities, a dulling of sexual desire, and a clarity of mind. No elaborate concern for ritual is in evidence but the natives clearly drink the kava in whatever amount they need to achieve this state of somnambulism.

The sharp contrast in the use of the kava ceremony between the Tongariki and the Samoa-Fiji islanders is quite clear from these reports. The latter concentrate their ceremony on ritualistic effect for both political and religious purposes. Whereas, the Tongariki islanders involved in a religious rebellion use the ceremony as a means for the drug experience.

Lophophora williamsii[1]

"Peyote" is a small cactus, Lophophora williamsii, found in Mexico and Southwestern region of the United States. For centuries it has been used by the Mexican Indians for the hallucinogenic properties of its eight alkaloids. Its major hallucinogen is synthetically produced as mescaline. The tops of the plant are ingested by the Indians after they have been dried. Since the late nineteenth century North American Indians have developed a religious cult using peyote, although its religious usage goes back much further. This cult has a practicing membership of nearly fifty thousand people now.

There is good documentation from the time of the Spanish Conquest that the Aztecs used peyote for its vision-producing power in their religious ceremonies. Also it is referred to as a cure for rheumatism in Aztec medical books. The contemporary peyote cult has been extensively studied by American anthropologists. They agree that this cult was a religious compensation for the Indians after their wars with the European settlers. The Indians use peyote for its hallucinations, which they see as messages from their savior-god "Peyote." Their religious practice incorporates elements of traditional Indian culture, Christianity, and new ethical prophecies arising out of the hallucinogenic experience itself. This new religion emerged in conflict with both the traditional Indian shamans and the Christian missionaries. It has organized nationally as the Native American Church,

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[1]Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 125-129; Vittorio Laternari, The Religions of the Oppressed, trans. by L. Sergio (New York: New American Library, 1965), 63-100; Weston Le Barre, The Peyote Cult (Enlarged Edition; New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

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and it is presently the only religious group in the United States that has the legal right to use hallucinogens in its religious services.

Psilocybe mexicana[1]

The Psilocybe mexicana is the most important of a series of hallucinogenic mushrooms discovered in the Western Hemisphere. Mexican Indians use it today for magico-religious purposes. The active principle of this plant is psilocybin. Some scholars argue that this mushroom is the ancient Aztec divine sacrament "Teonanctl" or "God's Flesh." There is evidence of an early origin of a mushroom cult in southern Mexico. Stone mushroom-shaped figures, dating back as early as 1500 B.C., and Mexican frescos with mushrooms dated between 500 and 200 A.D., have been found in this region. These findings have prompted speculation that a mushroom religion could have existed long before the Aztecs and could have even pre-dated the stone-carving technology that produced the artifacts which are now used to establish these early dates. The Spanish records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reveal both Aztec and Indian usage until the Catholic missionaries succeeded in repressing this practice. Today the shamans of southern Mexico use this hallucinogenic mushroom for divination and diagnosis in ceremonies involving only small groups instead of large rites involving whole tribes.

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[1]Efren C. Del Pozo, "Empiricism and Magic in Aztec Pharmacology," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 59-76; Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 159-162; Wasson, "Hallucinogenic Fungi," 27-42; R. Gordon Wasson, "Mushrooms," The Drug Experience, ed. by David Ebin (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 313-324.

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Amanita Muscaria[1]

The Eastern Hemisphere has its own sacred mushroom--the Amanita muscaria commonly called "fly agaric." It contains two powerful alkaloids--muscarine a deadly poison, and bufotenine, an hallucinogen. Its present area of usage is among the tribesmen of Siberia. There it is called "muchamor." These people eat the mushroom for its hallucinogenic effect and also drink the urine of one who has already eaten it to spread the effects among a wide number. It is reported to have a violent onset when consumed. Then the user falls into a restless coma, from which he later awakens to recount his contact with the spirit world. It is used by the shamans of these tribes to diagnose disease and to divine future events much as other hallucinogens. Some have speculated that the mushrooms have been in usage in this area for over four thousand years. Present practice would indicate that it is used for a variety of purposes and not only for magico-religious ones.

Cannabis sativa[2]

This is the famous or infamous East Indian hemp plant that

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[1]Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 118-122; Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. by W. R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 220-255 passim; Lewin, Phantastica, 123-129; R. Gordon Wasson, "Fly Agaric and Man," in Ethnopharmacologic Search, ed. by Efron, 405-414.

[2]Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 61-84; Lewin, Phantastica, 107-123; Lingeman, Drugs From A to Z, 35-37, 94-97, 142-154; William H. Mc Glothlin, "Social and Para-Medical Aspects of Hallucinogenic Drugs," The Use of LSD in Psychotherapy and Alcoholism (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 3-38.

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enjoys world-wide contribution and usage for both hedonistic and religious purposes. Its active principle was synthesized in 1967 as THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). It is known under a great diversity of names: marihuana, hashish, kif, bhang, ghanja, charas, dagga, majoon, dawamesk, etc. In these various preparations it may be eaten, drunk or smoked. It is usually considered a hallucinogen, but some pharmacologists dispute this because of the diversity of effects attributed to it.

The earliest literary reference to cannabis is in a Chinese pharmacopoeia which is traditionally dated around 3000 B.C., but not without dispute. There are references to it in early sanskrit literature and yogin have sometimes used it in their search for the egoless trance. Herodotus cites the Scythians' usage of it in a religious ceremony in 430 B.C. He reported that they burnt it on hot stones and inhaled the fumes. The Muslims, who were denied alcohol, have used it for centuries. The most famous association of cannabis with the Muslim religion is the usage of it as a reward for the religious murderers known now as the Assassins of Hasan-ki-Sabba late in the eleventh century A.D. In the nineteenth century around 1880, a new chief of the Baluba tribe in the Congo destroyed the old tribal religious practices and reorganized his tribe around the religious smoking of cannabis. In Jamaica today a group of lower-class blacks, the Ras Tafarians, a Christian sect, cling stubbornly to their use of ghanja as a means of communicating with God. In India it is still used by Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim peoples in various magico-religious ways. In neighboring Nepal, the Shivites and Buddhist monks also use it. Through this long association with humankind it has become

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difficult to precisely differentiate religious and secular uses of cannabis.

Solanaceae[1]

Another family of plants of ageless association with humankind is the Solanaceae (the potato). Its hallucinogenic members are: Atropa belladonna, Datura stramonium, Duboisia hopwoodii, Hyoscyamus niger, and Mandragora officinarum. Around the Mediterrean Ocean and throughout Europe Atropa belladonna is known as "belladonna" or "nightshade." It has three alkaloids: atropine, scopolamine and hyoscyamine. Hyoscyamus niger is known in the same area as "henbane," whose active principle is hyoscyamine. Covering a similar geography, Mandragora officinarum with hyoscyamine, scopolamine, and hyoscine is called "mandrake" for the manlike shape of its root. Datura scapaloline, found in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, is the best known hallucinogenic source in the Datura group, but other members of this family have also been found to have hallucinogens. It has been called many things including "jimsonweed," "thornapple," and "devil's apple." Hyoscyamine, atropine and scapaloline are its alkaloids. All these plants have been used also as poisons. Usually they are prepared as drinks or ointments.

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[1]Barnard, Mythmakers, 7-8, 15, 19, 82-89; Julio C. Baroja, The World of Witches (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 111, 205, 227, 254-255; Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 122-125; Peter Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization (New York: Avon Books, 1969), 98-101; Lewin, Phantastica, 129-140; Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 153-154.

The Old Word usage of these plants is ancient. There are Biblical references to mandrake, and medicinal references to these plants can be found among the Assyrian and the Egyptian records. Their usage was more magical than religious. They are not directly associated with any of the great world religions that originated in the Ancient Near East. Clearly there is no evidence as yet of a central cultic role for these plants. There is, however, a strong correlation of these drugs with criminal activity, including forced insanity, poisonings, and drugged sleep. The reported heights of their religious and magical usage was during the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries in Medieval Europe. The underground magico-religious practice of witchcraft made extensive usage of these plants. If these plants were not of major cultic significance in the Ancient Near East, they were central to the witchcraft cult of Medieval Europe. Scholars, aware of the hallucinogenic properties of these plants, now understand a major contributing factor to the witches' stories of flying, sexual orgies, and the bizarre reports of the "sabbaths."

Datura alone figures prominently in the magico-religious practices of both North and South American Indians. There are some historical references that have led scholars to speculate that datura was used by the ancient Incas and Chibcas. Today only isolated groups of Indians in Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Puru, Mexico and the Southwestern

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United States still use the datura plant. The pattern of their usage is similar to the shamanistic practice with other hallucinogenic plants. It is given to young men in their puberty rites; shamans ingest datura drinks for divination and diagnosis; in fact, it is used in any situation where one wishes to contact the spirit world.

Tabernanthe iboga[1]

"Iboga" is a newly discovered plant source for the alkaloid ibogaine, which in high dosages has hallucinogenic action much like cocaine. In West Africa it is used by non-literate tribes. The Bantu are reported to have their young men chew the leaves of this plant as both an ordeal and an ecstasy during their puberty rites. Limited research has been done in the field; it is not known how extensively this plant is used and for precisely what purposes.

Sophora secundeflora[2]

The "mescal beans" often confused with peyote buttons are actually from the plant Sophora secundeflora. This plant is rich in alkaloids; among them two are believed to be hallucinogenic--cytisine and sophorine. The Indians of Texas and Mexico used them widely in the famous "Red Bean Dance." Since the arrival of peyote with its superior hallucinogenic power, the mescal beans, which are also very poisonous, have fallen into disuse. There is a reference to its native use as early as 1539 A.D.

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[1]Cohen, The Beyond Within, 23; Schultes, "Place of Ethnobotany," 53; Lingeman, Drugs from A to Z, 114.

[2]Schultes, "New World Narcotics," 154-155.

Soma or Haoma[1]

The oldest plant substance associated with a religious ceremony, which from all ancient accounts appeared to have had a great intoxicating effect, is Soma or Haoma of Indo-Aryan usage. As Soma it appears in the Rig Vedas of the Hindus and as Haoma in the Avesta of the Persians. In both cases the literary evidence points to an early common origin for this religious drink among the rituals of the Indo-Aryan peoples who settled in Persia and in India. All of the ninth book of the Rig Vedas, with one hundred and fourteen hymns, is dedicated to the praise of this plant, the ritual drink, the god, and the inspirer of both men and gods. Yasha ten of the Avesta recounts the gift of Haoma from the sacred mountain. This account places the Haoma ritual earlier than the prophet Zoroaster in Persian religious development. At a later time he seems to have at least temporarily banned the use of Haoma because of its intoxicating effect. Most scholars believe both sacred literatures record a common religious practice. In both, the intoxicating beverage is associated with a fire ritual, which is the sacrifical fuel that keeps the universal order going. Neither ritual preparation allows the length of time necessary for natural fermentation to occur, which excludes alcohol as its psychoactive ingredient. Plant descriptions are

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[1] W.A. Addison, The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), 168, 174-175, 191-192; Barnard, Mythmakers, 7-8, 15; "Haoma," and "Soma," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), VI, 506-510, and XI, 685-686; George F. Moore, History of Religions (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1914), I, 244, 249, 255-256, 262-263, 388-390; Wasson, "Fly Agaric and Man," 405-414.

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similar, if vague, and a mountainous origin is cited for both. Finally, there is the linguistic similarity in the plant's name. Scholars have suggested several possible plant sources, such as: Cannabis sativa, Asclepias adica, or Sarcostemma viminale. The last two do not now have any intoxicating power in their present form. Cannabis is a possibility, but the early Indians did seem to differentiate it from the Soma drink. Most recently the sacred mushroom, Amanita muscaria, has attracted considerable scholarly support as the probable source of Soma.[1]

Greek Religious Drug Usage[2]

Scholars interested in the association between psychoactive plants and religion have noted three places in the culture of ancient Greece where some intoxicating substances may have been at work in their religion. First, there is the passage in the Homeric Odyssey where Helen prepares a drink by adding the "drug of forgetfulness," i.e. nepenthe. Second, the Delphi oracle was known to be a woman who was placed into a trance to receive her divine messages. Records indicate two possible ways in which a drug substance may have assisted her. Sometimes laurel leaves were either chewed or burnt and inhaled--

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[1] R. Gordon Wasson makes a very persuasive case for the Amanita muscaria as the probable source in his recently published Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972).

[2] Barnard, Mythmakers, 20; Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 124-125; Cohen, The Beyond Within, 13-15; Lewin, Phantastica, 129-132; Schultes, "Place of Ethnobotany," 51; Wasson, "Hallucinogenic Fungi," 28, 35-37, 39-41.

cyanide gas could have been released by such means. Usually the woman sat over a natural fissure in the ground and inhaled fumes; was this possibly a natural source of carbon dioxide gas? Finally, Plato is called as a witness. He is reported to have participated in the Eleusis Mysteries. Since these rites were secret no one knows actually what was involved, other than the initiate spent a whole night in the ritual and often reported experiencing ineffable visions. In the Laws Plato talks briefly about the usefulness of a drug that would test the citizen's courage. Also his description of the vision of the Ideas in the cave story found in the Republic is cited as a veiled reference to his own awakening through the Mysteries. Some have advanced the idea of ancient Greek usage of sacred mushrooms, but others point out that the plants from the solanaceae family were also easily available during this time. All the above is serious speculation and nothing more than that. Of major interest to me is the difficulty finding any evidence in the Ancient Near East, Rome or Greece of a central role for these intoxicating substances in their religions.[1] If these drug substances were in use, it would seem more probable to assume they were used privately or in small groups for esoteric purposes.

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[1] I remain unconvinced as do most scholars by John M. Allegro's fanciful attempts at providing a drug cult origin for Christianity in his The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

Non-drug physically induced altered states of consciousness[1]

Throughout history and in most of the world's religions humans have used physical means for changing their state of consciousness in the quest for religious experience. The priests in the Egyptian temples fasted, went into isolation and deprived their senses of all stimuli. The Sioux were chief among the Plains Indians in their vision quest. It included fasting, thirst, self-torture, and exposure to the burning sun. The elaborate physical and breathing exercises developed in Hatha-yoga are only one of several systems used by the Hindu to prepare for samadhi. The Muslim Sufi sought their visions through fasts, exhausting dances, long vigils, and breath retention. The Christian mystics used fasting, chanting, flagellation, and other means for mortifying the flesh in order to see God. Through these and many other spiritual exercises devised for this vision quest, the body is subjected to stress or deprivation. Current medical and psychological research on sensory deprivation has revealed that this action releases toxic substances into the blood stream, excites the glands, and alters the oxygen content of the blood. All produce varying changes in the consciousness of man. In all of these religious exercises two themes seem to be constant. Either the senses are deprived of all stimuli or sensory inputs are made monotonous.

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[1]Cohen, The Beyond Within, 25-26; Eliade, Shamanism, 33-144, 223; Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization, 163-166; R.E. L. Masters and Jean Houston, The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience (New York: Delta Books, 1967), 248-249; A. F.C. Wallace, Religion: An Anthropological View (New York: Random House, 1966), 55-56.

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Present psychological theory suggests that the survival-oriented brain humans have evolved biologically is driven to fantasizing its own content in situations of sensory deprivation or monotony. In contrast the hallucinogens overload the brain with stimuli and directly release the fantasizing potential of the brain.

Summary of Descriptive Trends

Although the historical, anthropological, and ethnobotanical data on the association of hallucinogens and religion are varied, certain trends can be noted. Natural sources for hallucinogens are available throughout the world. The variety of the means for administering these drugs reveals extraordinary human ingenuity in the use of these plant substances to achieve visions.

> Man in primitive societies the world around has found the most ingenious ways of administering narcotics. Intoxicating plants, or products from them, have been chewed in crude form or variously elaborated and consumed. They have been prepared in the form of thick syrups or pastes that are licked or smeared on the tongue or gums. Some have been smoked directly, as in pipes, cigars or cigarettes, or the fumes of them have been inhaled in sundry ways. There are those that have been applied to the skin or membranes in the form of ointments or unguents. Several are known to have been taken as an enema. Snuffing has been the preferred method of using a number of these agents.[1]

Such variety and ingenuity in drug usage shows a long historical association with humankind. The continuing drive in some men and in some cultural situations for the drug effect reveals a deep and

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[1]Schultes, 'South American Snuffs," 291.

abiding hunger to release the fantasizing potential of the brain. Many cultures, on the other hand, do not make a central place for the use of hallucinogens within their religions. Thus, availability over the long eons of history is not the decisive factor in the development of hallucinogenic religious cults.

In most of the cases I have enumerated the hallucinogenic vision is sought as a direct revelation, but one finds some other religious usages too. Powerful psychoactive plants are sometimes directly worshipped, as in the Inca's veneration of coca or in the South Sea Islander's kava ceremony. In both cases, even though with proper preparation and dosage these substances can produce visions or fantasies, they are revered just for the social functions they assist. With coca, it is the liberation from fatigue; with kava, it is the lubrication of the status relationships among people. In the Middle East, hashish was given as a reward for fulfilling a religious obligation to the Assassins. From these examples it is fair to conclude that the religious usage of hallucinogens is not limited to just producing visions. In these instances, at least, it is used religiously for its social functionality rather than as a means for revelation.

The historical documentation and the archaeological evidence are too sketchy and incomplete to outline a history of religious drug usage. In these data there is some historical evidence in several cultures of an early priestly usage of hallucinogens in formal religious rituals. Such a memory is found among the descendents of the Aztecs, the Incas, the Hindus and the Persians. The ritualistic use of Haoma is still observed by the Parsee. Aztec

and Inca usage of hallucinogens is remembered and reflected in the shamanistic practice among isolated tribal groups in Mexico and South America. The Rig Vedas and the Avesta contain the elaborate ritual texts for the ancient priestly rites using Soma or Haoma. Ancillary religious usage of cannabis is still observed in India and Nepal.

Archaeological evidence in Central and South America points to religious drug usage during pre-historic times long before the Aztec and Inca cultures. Anthropologists also cite the geographically widespread practice of chewing psychoactive leaf and ashes in both the New and Old Worlds as evidence of the early origin of this practice, probably during Paleolithic times.[1] Historical and archaeological evidences suggest that humans have known of these psychoactive plants since the dawn of time. Furthermore, hallucinogens may have played a central role in the priestly religion of certain ancient agricultural empires.

The kava ceremony of the South Sea Islands provides us with a clear instance of historical change in the relationship between a psychoactive drug and a religious ritual. In the data on the kava ceremony the early desacralization of this ceremony on Samoa and Fiji is evident, while the possible resacralization is seen in the nativistic rebellion on the island of Tongariki. Since the eighteenth century on Samoa and Fiji, when the priests lost control of the kava ritual to the political chieftans, there was a move away from the quest for vision toward a concentration on ritualistic detail.

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[1]Wassen, "South American Snuffs," 233-289; Wasson, "Hallucinogenic Fungi," 31.

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This shift, in the opinion of anthropologists, was from seeking contact with the spirit world toward a concern for the status relationships among the tribesmen. On Tongariki on the other hand, the recent move to reinstitute the kava ceremony was a return to their own cultural roots, with the drug experience being sought in its own right.

The shift at Tongariki is only one of several examples in the data of an association between religion and hallucinogens arising in conjuction with a nativistic rebellion against outsiders. The best documented and most famous of these is the Peyote religious movement among native American Indians. This pan-tribal movement has grown steadily since the late nineteenth century and hallucinogenic visionary experience is central to its cult. Also, the Ras Tafarians of Jamaica are a Christian sectarian movement among the lower class blacks, for whom the smoking of cannabis is a central part of their communication with God. Another example is the late nineteenth century tribal renewal movement among the Bantu of the Congo, where a new chief threw out the old religion and created a new one based on smoking cannabis. In each of these cases a small subculture within a larger society, feeling oppressed and abused, reconstituted its cultural self around an hallucinogenic experience.

The preponderance of the data collected for this study locates religious drug usage in contemporary non-literate societies who are at the tribal level in social development. Richard Blum confirms this trend in his "History of Hallucinogens," where he concluded "the most frequent pattern of hallucinogen use, cannabis excluded, appears to have been ritualistic in magico-religious-healing set-

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tings among non-literate societies."[1] This is in sharp contrast to other intoxicating drugs that he surveyed such as alcohol and tobacco. The dominant religious figure in these societies is the shaman. He uses the hallucinogenic plant as he does other physical means for achieving ecstatic experience. His purpose is contact with the spirit world. It is not the technique but the message sought that stands at the center of the tribal use of hallucinogens. The shaman seeks spiritual help in diagnosing sickness or in the divination of past and future events concerning enemies, wives, or any other personal and communal crisis.

The tribesman is introduced to the hallucinogenic experience usually through his puberty rites. Here the hallucinogen is both an ecstasy and an ordeal. The young man is given a message in such a traumatizing manner that he is not likely to forget it. Peter Farb cites such "puberty ordeals as mnemonic devices. . . Associating information with trauma is an ancient technique in education."[2] In such manner the tribe makes certain that information it deems necessary for its survival is literally unforgettable. The hallucinogen is central to the religious practice of these tribal societies. It has multiple purposes and frequent usage. Its visions are taken as the spiritual revelation of truth, and the individual and the community both put this information to direct pragmatic usage in their society.

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[1] Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 13.

[2] Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization, 100.

In summary, I found the following trends:

Hallucinogenic substances are generally available throughout the world, but mere availability does not lead to religious usage.

Religious usage of hallucinogens arises from some particular cultural need.

For the most part, it is the visionary revelation released by the drug that is sought and affirmatively appropriated in the religious context; however, there are a few cases of an association between religion and a drug where the primary aim is not the visionary experience, but instead social usefulness.

Finally, religious drug usage appears either early in the development of a civilization or after a major cultural crisis; the latter case might be viewed as an early stage in the renewal of that culture.

Scholarly Analysis

In the early 1950s Aldous Huxley, a British novelist and student of Eastern religions, engaged in self-experimentation with mescaline. He published an account of this experience in The Doors of Perception in 1953.[1] He described his drug experience as a mystical perception of the holy giveness of the universe and his unity with it. He was struck by the similarity of this experience with the literary accounts that the great mystics of East and West had made of their mystical experiences. Furthermore, all matters that appeared to him to be purely the projection of the human ego,

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[1]Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1963).

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its anxieties, moralities, and projects, paled into insignificance in comparison to the grandeur and giveness of nature. This carried him into a realm that stands beyond the reckoning of good and evil. From this experience Huxley concluded that such drugs might be a profound aid to contemporary humans in their quest for religious meaning.

After Huxley published his account, R. C. Zaehner, a Roman Catholic historian of religion, also took mescaline. He published a lengthy refutation of Huxley's analysis in Mysticism: Sacred and Profane.[1] He felt Huxley had endangered the historical value and meaning of the great mystics' experiences by reducing them to a drug-induced manic state, thereby replacing religion with mental illness. This was not Huxley's intention, of course, but Zaehner drew this conclusion from self-experimentation with mescaline and analysis of mystical experience.[2]

In his critique Zaehner developed a three-fold typology of mysticism: natural, monistic, and theistic.[3] In Zaehner's view Huxley experienced the first at most. In natural mysticism one experiences a oneness with the secular world of change. In either Eastern or Western monistic mysticism, one turns from the changing world of nature inward to meditate upon the eternal changeless self. This is the first level of religious mysticism, for it happens

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[1] R.C. Zaehner, Mysticism: Sacred and Profane (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[2] Zaehner, Mysticism, 86-88.

[3] Zaehner, Mysticism, 27-28, 44.

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in the dimension of eternity. Theistic mysticism begins with the meditation on the eternal self and ends in the loving offering of that soul towards God. God in his grace completes the experience by taking the soul up into Himself where the soul is lost in the person of God. In Zaehner's analysis only the last two kinds of mysticism are religious. Natural mysticism involving identification of the self with the changing world of nature is purely secular in this perspective.

In Zaehner's view the final criterion of genuine religious mysticism is the ethical worth of the mystics' lives. Religious mysticism produces a transformation of character. Huxley's admission that mescaline revealed a reality that placed him beyond good and evil is the final proof in Zaehner's mind of the inherent secularity of Huxley's experience.[1] Such natural mysticism or emotional mania is the polar opposite of genuine religious mysticism for Zaehner.

When one encounters the Holy what is it that one meets? This is the issue that divides Zaehner and Huxley. There is a holy nonselfness in Huxley's experience of the giveness of nature. Zaehner may have experienced a similar reality when on mescaline, but for him this was not sacred. It was trivial, if not demonic.[2] He looked for the holy in a person, a divine self of infinite goodness. In both accounts the reader becomes aware of encountering the theological framework of the two men and not merely a description of the mescaline experience. Implicit in this debate is the ageless controversy be-

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[1] Zaehner, Mysticism, 128, 149-152, 168.

[2] Zaehner, Mysticism, 214-226.

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tween the East and the West over the status and worth of the human ego. The Eastern mystic loses his self into the absolute non-selfness of eternity; whereas, the Western mystic loses his self in the divine person of God.

Furthermore, beyond a fundamental difference in theological orientation, they are in disagreement over the methodology of mysticism. Zaehner stands in the tradition of mysticism via negativa: Huxley's mysticism is, to coin a phrase, via positiva. In the former there is the turning inward away from the world to experience the holy in changelessness, while in the latter there is an intensification of one's experience of the world until one penetrates its sacredness. Classical mysticism, both Eastern and Western, has tended to favor the ascetic via negativa. As I noted in the discussion of non-drug physical alterations of consciousness, the various methods of classical asceticism work to release the fantasizing potentials of the mind through deprivation of sensory input. In contrast, Huxley and others in their reports of the hallucinogenic encounter experience an intensification, even an overloading of the brain by sensory stimuli. This also seems to release the fantasizing potentials of the brain. In either case, from a phenomenological viewpoint, one method of achieving the mystical state is no more natural or spontaneous in its origin than the other.

Three critical issues have appeared in their debate over mescaline. What is the nature of the sacred? What is the appropriate means for encountering it? What is the role of ethical change in evaluating religious experience? These three questions form the basis for my examination of the work of other contemporary scholars

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who have tried to explicate the relationships of hallucinogens and religious experience.

In 1963 the late Dr. Walter Pahnke, a psychiatrist, compared mystical and hallucinogenic experience in an experimental project for a doctorate in the history of religion at Harvard University.[1] After an examination of the literature of classical mysticism, he identified nine subjective characteristics of this experience: unity, transcendence of time and space, deep positive feelings, a sense a sacredness, a noetic quality to all experience, paradoxicality, alledgedineffability, transiency of the peak experience, and persisting positive changes in attitudes and behavior.[2] In a controlled double-blind experiment he administered a hallucinogen to several seminarians in a chapel setting on Good Friday. Afterwards the subjects in the experiment and in the control group were interviewed and responded to a questionnaire designed to test their experience against the nine categories of the classical mystical experience. To experimentally qualify as having had a mystical experience from the hallucinogen, a subject had to score sixty to seventy per cent in each of the nine categories. As a result of this experiment and another test held a few years later at a mental hospital, Pahnke established a statistically significant correlation between the hallucinogenic and his operationally defined mystical experience. Within the limits of a scientific experiment this study is accurate and thoroughly convincing.

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[1]Walter N. Pahnke, "LSD and Religious Experience," LSD, Man and Society. ed. R. C. DeBold and R. C. Leaf (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 60-84.

[2]Pahnke, "LSD and Religious Experience," 63-64.

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Dr. Pahnke believed the hallucinogenic drug worked as a release mechanism for the brain's fantasizing capacity with extra-drug factors of personality and of the environment actually shaping the content of any hallucinogenic experience. Therefore, he had used a supportive religious environment and had chosen subjects with a high degree of interest in religion for these experiments.[1]

Professor Huston Smith of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology published an article critical of Zaehner's analysis of religious drug experience.[2] Smith argued with Zaehner at four levels: the historical, the phenomenological, the philosophical and the religious. According to Smith, Zaehner ignored the historical association between intoxicants and religion. This history opens the question of precisely how or whether drugs shaped a particular religion. At the phenomenological level Smith believes no descriptive difference can be drawn between classical mysticism and drug-induced religious experience in some persons. Smith faulted Zaehner's typology of mysticism for being a theological evaluation rather than a descriptive phenomenology. At best, Zaehner tried to prove that hallucinogenic experience is not theistic mysticism, but even in this endeavor he completely ignored the evidence gathered by anthropologists on the native American Indians' reports of their theistic mystical experiences while using peyote. Smith concluded his phenomenological argument by citing Pahnke's research as a convincing demonstration of the descriptive

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[1] Pahnke, "LSD and Religious Experience," 65.

[2] Huston Smith, "Do Drugs Have Religious Import?" LSD: The Consciousness-expanding Drug. ed. David Solomon (New York: Berkeley Medallion Book, 1964), 155-169.

congruency between hallucinogenic experience and classical mysticism.

What then are the philosophical possibilities for understanding this experience? Zaehner's fear, according to Smith, is the reduction of mysticism to psychosis. Without denying the descriptive similarity, Smith wanted to place it within a more positive conceptional framework. Perhaps the hallucinogen functions as an ecstatic trauma for the self, which evokes a genuine religious response, similar to that found in "foxhole" religion. Then as a person finds himself coming off this drug trauma he may feel a deep gratitude and renewed appreciation for life. Or, perhaps the drug brings awareness to the deeper level of the cerebral cortex that is directly in tune with the richness of the environment's stimuli. Such an awareness, usually repressed by the rational consciousness, could give a person a deeper spiritual sense of being "at home" in this world.

At the religious level of analysis Smith agreed with Zaehner in stressing transformative personal change as the final criterion for evaluating the religious significance of hallucinogenic experience. This experience could lead one to a simple religion of experience unrelated to the other demands of social and ethical life. Instead Smith suggested a three-fold movement is necessary for an experience to be judged fully religious. First there is the experiential involvement of the emotions in awe, then this is followed by the movement of the mind in belief, and this is completed by the activity of the will in obedience. For Smith hallucinogens can aid in the religious life but they are not a religious life in themselves. In summary, Smith faulted Zaehner's critique of drug-induced mysticism for its unarticulated religious biases, and proposed instead a

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broader conceptional framework for evaluating the relationship between hallucinogens and religion.

Two other scholars, a husband and wife team, have produced one of the most exhaustive attempts to relate hallucinogens to man's psychological, social and religious experiences. In their study, The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience. R. E. L. Masters and Jean Houston summarized a large number of studies in which twenty-five to thirty-three percent of the hallucinogenic subjects reported having a religious experience.[1] In most of these cases, in contrast to Pahnke's experiment, the researcher had not encouraged such a religious orientation towards hallucinogenic experience. Masters and Houston doubted the validity of such a large percentage for genuine religious experiences on drugs. In their view the subjects may only be reporting that they experienced something beyond their ordinary expectations.

Can a scholar find a criterion for recognizing the genuine religious experiences from subjective reports? They attempted this task through a Jungian depth psychology. They established four basic levels of the hallucinogenic experience: the sensual, the symbolic, the integrative, and the religious. Their criterion for moving beyond the first three to the fourth level is the judgment by both observer and subject that the experience is one of transformative change for the subject. In their analysis the first three levels are purely personal levels; religious reports here are only euphoric escapes. The religious level, however, is a genuine trans-

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[1]Masters and Houston, Varieties of Psychedelic Experience, 255-258.

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personal experience. Such a transpersonal experience is indicated by the subjective certainty of a significant change for the subject and by the positive behavioral changes observed by others. Only three per cent of the cases reported in their study qualified as hallucinogenic religious experiences.[1]

Masters and Houston also noted the contrast in the methodologies between hallucinogenic and ascetic mysticism. They see these as divergent strategies for mystical experience. The classical ascetic approach, as noted above, is usually via negativa. The hallucinogen, on the other hand, works through stimuli overload or enrichment. The latter might be described as "a flight towards reality" as opposed to the flight away from reality of the traditional via negativa. Both methodologies, moreover, are forms of "provoked" mysticism, since they do not spontaneously occur without some effort.[2] This distinction is the same as that noted earlier as the via negativa and the via positiva. Neither can claim to be "natural" mysticism.

The fundamental issue underlying this scholarly discussion is the definition of religious experience. More specifically it is a debate over how we should go about defining it. As in most such debates the conclusions are hidden in the presuppositions. Smith made this evident in his critique of Zaehner's position. If one accepts Pahnke's operational definitions of mysticism, then it

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[1] Masters and Houston, Varieties of Psychedelic Experience, 259-267, 299-301.

[2] Masters and Houston, Varieties of Psychedelic Experience, 312-313.

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follows that, given the right psychological set, a religiously supportive setting, and a proper amount of an hallucinogen, the subject's experience will be descriptively indistinguishable from the definitions of classical mysticism.

Certainly none of the proponents claim that all hallucinogenic experiences are religious. All they argue is that some are. All agree that an hallucinogen is an aid to religious experience, i.e. a releasing of latent capacities in a person, and not the creator of that capacity. A few suggest that not even all mystical drug experiences should necessarily be considered fully religious. Zaehner was the most critical on this point. If one accepts his theological analysis of the content of mysticism, then any natural world-affirming mysticism is not religious. It is common knowledge that subjects sometimes report shattering personal experiences after taking hallucinogens, but, since these experiences are felt as personally bad, evil, or even nihilistic, they are not considered religious by either the subject or the clinical observer.

For all of these scholars the final criterion for recognizing a genuine religious experience is the necessity for transformative personal change. If an hallucinogen induces a transformative behavioral shift which is judged as religious by the subject and by the observer, then all these scholars would accept that experience as authentically religious. Implicit in this experience is also a subjective certainty about the rightness of the new perception and of the positive behavioral changes growing out of it. From a sociological viewpoint such an experience has its own charismatic authority. Professor Smith summed up the most complete conceptual frame-

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work for evaluating the hallucinogenic experience. His model has three moments: the feelings in awe, the mind in belief, and the will in obedience. There is a movement from the personal to the symbolic and then to the social world. Therefore, to judge any drug experience as religious would require the passage of time and observation of behavior.

The difference noted by Masters and Houston between the methodological directions of ascetic and hallucinogenic mysticism is also very productive. It relates directly to Zaehner's dichotomy between non-religious world-affirming mysticism and religious other-worldly mysticism. It is obvious from the clinical evidence and the experimental research on non-drug physically induced altered states of consciousness that both forms of mysticism are provoked. Furthermore, provoked, rather than spontaneous, mysticism is the historically preponderant and classical form of religious mysticism. Zaehner is trying to prescribe a certain revelation, and, by implication, a certain methodology. In so doing, he rules out any genuine comparison of these experiences. In many discussions of hallucinogens and mysticism there is an implicit thread running through the argument that mysticism <u>via negativa</u> is more natural. As we increase our knowledge of the bio-chemistry of the brain, we may more adequately differentiate between these two forms of experience or even find their basic similarity. Until then, we shall probably continue to find just a trace of puritanism in our reticence to accept hallucinogenic mysticism at the same level with ascetically induced mysticism. It appears as a cheap form of grace. Perhaps such a reticence is theologically valid, but in the careful phenomenological descriptions of

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these two states one must not intrude religious evaluations.

Inescapably, our cultural definitions of religion and experience intrude into the scholarly search for a conceptual framework for relating hallucinogens and religion. Neither research subjects nor scholars can escape the tautology implicit in the cultural definitions of experience. If there was a danger in Pahnke's work with experimental methodology it lies in the prestructuring of data necessary for a controlled experiment. This reduces the richness of the data one selects in making an analysis and an evaluation. There is a certain surdness to experience. In seeking to understand a phenomenon, controversial or even prejudicial to our own presuppositions, it is important to do a rich accounting of that experience before categorizing it precisely. If this discussion concerning drugs and religion is to be advanced it will be necessary to establish a dialectical interaction, between our definitions of what is a religious experience and what the subjects report they are experiencing as religious under the influence of hallucinogens. In other words, the social and cultural context of the experience must be seen as both a variable, for which to control, and as a subject, for which an account is to be given. Only by describing the incomplete and fragmentary data of this experience can we correct our definitions and categories, and, thereby, enlarge our perception of the reality under study.

Synthesis and Interpretation

As I concluded in the first section, hallucinogens are associated with religion either early in the social or religious develop-

ment of a people or after a major cultural crisis that demanded a reorganization of their community. There I also noted a hallucinogen is usually associated with religion because of its vision-producing ability. What are humans seeking in visionary experience? Furthermore, communities, which use hallucinogens, develop social and cultural processes for structuring this experience. Why is it that these processes are often forms of religious renewal? Finally, I found that hallucinogens play a vital religious role in contemporary non-literate societies, but there is no evidence that they play a central role in any of today's major religions. Why does religious drug usage disappear? In answering these questions I shall construct an ideal-type model on the dialectical relationship between religion and hallucinogens. In this model I will order the descriptive trends noted in the historical, anthropological, and ethnobotanical data and create a theoretical perspective for viewing this interaction.

In a study published in the late 1950s Anthony F. C. Wallace, anthropologist, compared the experiences of patients receiving hallucinogens in a clinical setting with the usage of hallucinogens in contemporary non-literate societies.[1] In hospital settings, spontaneously occurring hallucinations are interpreted by patients and doctors as signs of mental illness. In the early studies with hallucinogens, therefore, doctors and patients interpreted the latter's subjective responses to hallucinogens as psychotic. In contrast, in the non-literate societies, hallucinations, either spon-

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[1] A. F. C. Wallace, "Cultural Determinants of Response to Hallucinatory Experience," A. M. A. Archives of General Psychiatry, I (July, 1959), 58-69.

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taneously occurring or deliberately provoked, are often sought out intentionally and are affirmatively received by both the subject and his community. Wallace found this contrast between the doctors and the tribesmen instructive. In the tribal setting the cultural focus was on the content of the experience, while in the hospital setting the focus was on the fact of its occurrence, followed by a search for a generating cause. Most of the scholars discussed in this study, like their cultural counterparts, the doctors, also focus their attention on the fact or on the methodology of the religious experience. The place to begin an interpretation of religious drug usage is by noting that religious users are seeking content and not just a stimulating or strange experience.

In his study on Drugs and Society, Richard Blum advanced the hypothesis that hallucinogens are associated with a religious renewal movement after a cultural crisis because the experience is useful for new symbolic elaborations by the community.[1] This theory, along with Wallace's observation concerning the quest for content, provides us with the beginnings for an answer to why hallucinogenic experience is sought for religious purposes. As I mentioned in the conclusion in section two, any human experience including a hallucinogenic one is caught up in the tautologies of cultural definitions. The hallucinogen, however, releases new images, fantasies and feelings at such a rapid rate and in such great quantities that the cultural circles of meaning cannot totally contain them. Hallucinogenic experience may disrupt temporarily the social definitions of self-

[1] Blum, Society and Drugs, I, 132.

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identity and the cultural situation. It is then that the normal "circles" of meaning become "spirals" of meaning instead. The hallucinogen is, in this case, a source of cultural energy for new symbolic elaboration in the individual and/or communal quest for meaning. All the scholars of religion in this study, whether they saw the hallucinogenic experience as a mystical perception, a traumatic crisis, or even nonsense, agreed that the final criterion for its authenticity would be the emergence of socially useful transformative energy. This is precisely what tribal man is doing in his use of hallucinogens in his religious renewal. Perhaps it is what young Americans are doing in their usage, too.

What happens after the original quest for vision? Huston Smith's three-fold model of religious experience gives us a useful framework for explicating the developmental process between religion and hallucinogens. There were three distinct movements in his model: the emotions in awe, the mind in belief, and the will in obedience. There is an experience around which belief develops and action is taken. The drug can release new energy in a revelatory experience. This revelation is shared in the community by verbalizations, which then become a myth, a message, or a gospel. From this belief a perspective will develop for assessing or evaluating appropriate interaction among the community's members. Social structures and processes are created corporately to sustain the original revelation, the verbal message derived from it, and the renewed sense of communal ethos. There is a natural movement, as Max Weber documented in his studies, from the charismatic experience with its authority towards the institutionalization of ethical and legal experience with its

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kind of authority.[1]

One can imagine this institutionalization process in the relationship between these drugs and religion. The drug is used as a new energizer. The community seeks to direct this energy toward its cultural renewal by developing controls for it, first, at the level of verbalization in myths and symbols, later, at the level of institution in rituals and churches. In this social process there is a change in the source of the religious experience. In the early stages there is an inner-directedness toward the drug experience, but later as religious institutions are created there would be a shift toward other-directedness. When this shift occurs the primal experience will shift also from experiencing a saving vision to experiencing saved relationships. At this time the hallucinogen may be seen by the leaders of the community as an unsettling source of new energy. It would be possible to expect rigorous mythological controls for the hallucinogenic experience, followed in some cases by a lessening of the frequency of drug usage, or even a weakening of the drug itself in order to control it effectively.

If the above developmental direction is correct, then the following social changes in the form of religion should be observable. In the earliest phase the hallucinogenic experience would be identified with the experience of salvation. Each individual would seek it, and would share it with the others in his community. Next gifted religious poets would emerge to externalize this experience in mythology. Such persons might become specialists in the techniques of

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[1]Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion. trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 46-79.

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contacting the spirit world, i.e. the shamans. The community might pick special occasions in the life cycle for the hallucinogenic experience, i.e. puberty rites, and other rites of passage. The development of such rites would naturally lead to specialists in their performance, especially as the community grew in its own social complexity, i.e. the priests.

At this moment the movement away from the hallucinogenic experience has begun. Increasing energy in the community will focus instead upon social obligations and relationships. Development might go in many different ways. Those who have access to the hallucinogen might be restricted. For instance, only adults or only men could use it. Or, restrictions might develop as to the time, place and manner of its usage. This trend in the direction of priestcraft could possibly lead to the restriction of the drug to just the priests themselves. In this sketch of possible developments the critical issue is not the particular social forms, but rather the point at which the shift is away from the hallucinogenic experience to the ordering of its role withing the community's life. The natural logic of this development leads to the realization that the social relationships originally developed to structure the experience become, in fact, the content of the experience itself. Emile Durkheim in his early studies noted this and placed it at the center of his definition of religion, where he said the community itself becomes the object of its own worship.[1]

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[1]Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. trans. J. W. Swain (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 462-496.

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This change might encourage a struggle for power among the leadership in the community for control of the rituals of primary meaning. Economic, political, social, or technological change can also hasten this religious development. Recall the struggle for power over the kava ceremony in the South Sea Islands. There the political chiefs emerged victorious over the priests. The result was a weakening of the drug effect and a re-focusing of the ritual upon the status relationships in the community. At this late stage desacralization has occurred. Any arbitrary factors such as hallucinogenic experience would have to be firmly controlled or dismissed from central significance in their religion. The hallucinogen would probably be used during this phase by individuals for hedonistic purposes unrelated to religion. Cannabis may well have suffered this fate. During this desacralized phase of religion, new religious protests would be confined to small subcultures within the larger society. Whether or not these groups would choose an hallucinogen to facilitate their religious experience would depend on its availability and the social situation of the rebellious subculture.

Several scholars for a variety of reasons have sharply differentiated between hallucinogenic and ascetic mysticism. I prefer to characterize them as different methodologies, i.e. via negativa and via positiva. If this developmental model is adequate, ascetic mysticism would be associated with rebellious high-status subcultures dissatisfied with their complex societies but only minimally interested in changing the status system itself. Such groups would invent rational, rigorous, and controllable techniques for releasing their inner spiritual energies. These groups would come out of

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priestly backgrounds where rigorous training is stressed as the appropriate way to genuine religious experience. In sharp contrast would be lower-class, even illiterate, groups who feel oppressed by a culture they do not accept or understand. They would probably turn to ecstatic techniques and nativistic rebellions associated with the shamanic level of religious development, and would be open to the use of an hallucinogen. In both instances the focus is upon the release of new spiritual energies; only the techniques and social goals chosen would be in the cultural direction their differing social locations encouraged. The former seeks withdrawal for concentration, perhaps even on a very old priestly message, while the latter seeks a new gospel of liberation created out of the overloading of stimuli. On the historical scale, then, hallucinogenic mysticism would be associated with tribal societies. Ascetic mysticism, on the other hand, would probably not be developed until the emergence of complex agricultural societies. In either case, it is probably not useful to talk about the "natural" form of mysticism, since both are provoked, but rather to see them as religious techniques which reflect their social and cultural situation.

Let me review my hypotheses about the interaction between hallucinogens and religions. First in early society or immediately after a cultural crisis, hallucinogens may be used to release new energies for confronting the problem of cultural meaning. Hallucinogens serve this purpose in their vision-producing ability and in their emotional self-validation of the vision. It is a charismatic experience for the community.

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Second, the community elaborates the drug experience into a myth and a message. This arises out of the verbal sharing of each others' experience with the drug, until a standard version is created. This verbalization involves materials from the social and cultural situation of the community and is in no simple way reducible to the hallucinogenic effect. This phase of development is completed when a mythological interpretation of the hallucinogenic experience stands at the center of the cult. Let us call this a religion of salvation, for the saving experience released by the drug and structured by the communal myth is the primary functional goal at this stage.

The third level of development requires a major shift. Here the message is institutionalized through an ethical re-ordering of social relationships and the creation of religious actions. These are social realities which can be learned without the hallucinogenic experience. The community's concern shifts from the quality of its drug experience to focus on the quality of its social order. The renewed communal relationships can, in fact, become the religious experience replacing the hallucinogenic experience. Now the hallucinogenic experience may be seen as dysfunctional, since its continuing release of new energies might threaten the good social order. So, the drug may be weakened, taken less frequently, or dispensed with altogether. This third level of development could be characterized as a shift from a salvational religion to an ethical religion.

To put this developmental model in a nutshell, one could say that in the first stage the experience itself is seen as education unto salvation, but in the second stage a certain amount of education is necessary to correctly perceive the saving drug experience,

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and in the final phase the drug experience is no longer necessary in order to have the correct education for experiencing the saving social relationships. I would expect to find the hallucinogen used primarily at the first and second levels. At the third level it would have to be abandoned or minimized in order not to disrupt the elaborate educational processes.

Such a theory is one perspective on our contemporary situation. The hallucinogens are found among tribal societies or among rebellious subcultures in complex societies. In the latter case spiritual independence is sought from an oppressive larger society. The major religions of the world with their complex mythologies and systems of leadership would allow hallucinogens a minor role, if any, but they could well honor ascetic mysticism.

Drawing upon this developmental model, I can establish three criteria for validating a case of religious drug usage:

(1) The subjects would report their hallucinogenic experience in religious categories as an awesome encounter with a sacred cosmos;

(2) They would use this holy encounter to create, from the cultural resources at hand, their own myth of ultimate meaningfulness;

(3) Then, based on the drug encounter and the sacred myth, they would begin to transform their everyday behavior to reflect their new religious understanding.

Furthermore, as they symbolically elaborate their myth and socially reconstruct their lives, they would also shift away from intense drug experiences. This suggests three phases or moments in this dialectical process:

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(1) the encounter moment, with its inner-directed emphasis upon the visionary experience itself;

(2) the myth moment, with its emphasis on the symbolic elaboration of a model of the cosmos and a model for living;

(3) the ethos moment, with its emphasis on reconstructing everyday behavior in order to achieve a communal experience of wholesome social relatedness.

During the first two phases hallucinogens would be commonly used, but during the last phase, their usage would be de-emphasized.

This ideal-type model for describing and analyzing the dialectical interaction between hallucinogenic experience and religious development suggests two major questions for guiding contemporary field research. They are:

(1) is there a case of genuine religious drug usage among young Americans today?

(2) is there an observable decline in their drug usage as they socially develop a religious understanding of their lives and of their drug experience?

In the next two chapters I use these same two questions, three criteria, and threefold model to present a case study of Stephen and the Monday Night Class.

CHAPTER II

STEPHEN AND THE MONDAY NIGHT CLASS

In Chapters Two and Three, I present my case study of Stephen and the Monday Night Class. The presentation of the materials in both chapters is guided by the two general questions stated at the end of Chapter One. For this chapter the question is: "Is there a case of genuine religious drug usage among young Americans today?" In giving an affirmative answer, I document the specific ways this group meets the three criteria for validating a case of religious drug usage. In Chapter Three, the attention is on how they created their community and on how these social processes affected their drug usage. By utilizing the threefold model concerning hallucinogens and religious development, I trace their movement from "myth" to "ethos" in Chapter Three. This chapter, on the other hand, recounts the earlier phase of development from "encounter" to "myth." At the beginning of both chapters, I briefly tell the story of their common history relevant to that particular phase in their religious lives.

The Psychedelic Path to the Monday Night Class

The one common factor reported by most members of the Monday Night Class was their psychedelic drug experience. Yet they were not always users of these drugs. In general, popular usage of these substances by young Americans began around 1965. During the next

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five years, both the range and frequency of experimentation with hallucinogens increased; some estimates run as high as two million single-time users of LSD and other high-energy psychedelics by 1970. Continuing experimentation with various forms of cannabis sativa (marihuana and hashish) was reported in estimates of eight to twelve million single-time users by 1969.[1] Out of this general social movement of psychedelic drug experimentation came the members of the Monday Night Class.

From Stephen's teachings and my conversations with him and other members of this community, I recreate the history of their drug usage. I will focus on Stephen's autobiographical memories as he continually re-told his story, giving his testimony about drugs, in his teachings. Since Stephen, now thirty-seven years old, is probably ten years older than the average participant in the community, I do not offer his story as the typical way that all community members developed their drug using patterns. Rather, I focus on his history because of its impact on and acceptance by his students in their understanding and shaping of their own drug using patterns. My interest in this recital is in the general direction of the development in drug usage and not in any individual developmental or motivational pattern.

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[1]The Consumers Union recently published a comprehensive survey of the history and patterns of general drug usage in the U.S.A. Edward M. Brecher, et.al., Licit and Illicit Drugs (Mount Vernon, New York: Consumers Union, 1972). For relevant statistical estimates see pages 366-367, and 422-423.

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Stephen remembers his teenage years as the time of the "beatniks."[1] This was a time and a movement before the psychedelics came. He recalled how he was operating a coffee house in 1958 in San Bernadino, California.[2] The drugs for him then were coffee, cigarettes, beer and liquor, and occasionally an amphetamine pill. Although some beatniks at this time used marihuana in combination with wine, Stephen himself did not. Clothing was in black, gray and subdued colors. The emotional tone of interpersonal encounters was described as "cool." If the beatniks in general placed an emphasis on the "down" or depressive side of a more general pattern of middle-class manic-depressive drug using patterns, nevertheless, in the range of mood-altering substances they used, the shift from hyper-active to sedative was present. For most of the twentieth century Americans had available various forms of "social drugs" as means for managing their moods and adjusting their internal state

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[1]Bruce Cook, The Beat Generation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); Lawrence Lipton, The Holy Barbarians (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1959); Ned Polsky, "The Village Beat Scene: Summer 1960," in his Hustlers, Beats, and Others (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969).

[2]The Golden Gate Park meeting, San Francisco, May 27, 1970. Information from my field research is documented in field notes, tape-recordings, or transcripts and audio-tapes given to me by them.

to match the performance expectations of a given social situation.[1] A background of this general drug usage pattern is historically given and culturally pervasive and is present in Stephen's history, as indeed, in all of our histories in the USA. The beatniks were some of the first to stress publicly one side of this emotional equation over against the materialist, competitive, and aggressive side. They sought "cool", with the support of wine, sedatives, and some marihuana, while their more energetic side, released by coffee, was channeled into artistic projects, underground political and cultural protests, and the bohemian life-style. Then, before the coming of psychedelics, Stephen, and others who identified with the beatniks of the late 1950's, found some social or cultural changes in their life-style for expressing dissent from the status quo. Their predominant forms of drug usage, however, remained within the general pattern prevalent among the upper and middle classes of twentieth century America.

Stephen reported that his first successful experience with marihuana was at his twenty-seventh birthday party.[2] By then he had lived through high school in southern California, the Marine Corps in

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[1]For good general discussion of "social" drug usage in relationship to drug misuse, see Joel Fort, The Pleasure Seekers: the Drug Crisis, Youth and Society (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 29-52; for a recent comprehensive social survey of general drug usage, see National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse's second report, Drug Use in American: problem in perspective (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973).

[2]The Canterbury House meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 13, 1970.

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the Korean War, finished both his B.A. and M.A. in English and Creative Writing at San Francisco State College, and was teaching there in the English Department in association with Professor S. I. Hayakawa.[1] Before this he had had one negative experience with "grass" when a fellow high school class-mate had shared some with him and then manipulated his reaction to scare him. "He took me out to the edge of a curb and he said, 'Look down there at the edge of that canyon. See the rocks and the rapids? See the white water breaking around the rapids?' And he pushed me off."[2] He had not been interested since then, but now, all his students were "turning on to grass," and one of them brought some to his party.

Sometime during the evening his friend took him aside into another room where they could be alone, and they shared a pipe-full of marihuana. Stephen recalled this as excellent powerful cannabis, the kind popularly called "Acapulco Gold." He enjoyed this experience immensely, feeling relaxed and "high." At one point he felt that he could understand what his friend was thinking, and feeling, too. His friend confirmed this sense of telepathy in a non-verbal manner, and Stephen realized that "they were in each other's heads."

After this positive experience Stephen began to smoke as much "grass" as he could. That year, 1965, he decided to quit teaching and he and one of his students who became his wife, Margaret, left

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[1] S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action (second edition; New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1964) is his classic interpretation of the General Semantics of Alfred Korzybski.

[2] Rackham Hall meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970.

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San Francisco.[1] They went to the British Honduras in Central America, where they lived for several months, just relaxing and smoking a lot of good grass. Stephen has never said much in his teachings about this period of time, other than his increasing experience with marihuana. It is my speculation that this was also a time when Stephen was still trying to be a writer, and he may have been writing during this period. In any case, they had returned to San Francisco by the school year 1966-67, when the Haight-Ashbury came into its own as the Bethlehem of that new children's crusade, the psychedelic "Hippies."[2]

I did not hear from Stephen any detailed account of his first few experiences with LSD. Many of the early ones must have happened during this year. His comments later about these early experiences confirm that they were not considered spiritually important. It was from his twenty-sixth "trip on acid" that he dated his own spiritual rebirth.[3] The crucial core of this experience was his personal discovery that "Spirit is Real." Before this he considered himself a typical higher-educated intellectual who was an agnostic or an atheist

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[1]Rackham Hall meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970.

[2]Lewis Yablonsky, The Hippie Trip (New York: Pegasus, 1968), was one of the earliest field research reports by a social scientist. Two famous journalistic portraits of this social scene were Joan Didion, Slouching Towards Bethlehem (New York: Dell, 1968), 84-128, and Nicholas Von Hoffman, We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against (Greenwich, Connecticut,: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1968).

[3]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, March 16, 1970.

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about religious claims. Through this psychedelic experience he saw "how the universe works," that it is spiritual in its essence. From this experience he dated his continuing work to explore and to reshape his own life in order to be in tune with the universe's spiritual essence.

There is some evidence that Stephen and Margaret continued to experiment and use a wide-range of drugs during this time. During 1967, Margaret was interviewed as one of fifteen Voices From the Love Generation by a professor of English at San Francisco State concerned with letting the "hippies" speak for themselves.[1] The interview begins with her describing a methedrine "high", although LSD is discussed at more length and given central significance in her report. Margaret had been involved in Los Angeles in the last phase of the Beatnik movement, and reported that she had been using marihuana since she was sixteen. Direct evidence of continuing usage of liquor, cigarettes, and coffee is missing, but later positive efforts in the development of the Monday Night Class to discourage usage of these substances suggest that they were probably still using some of these at this time. In summary, then, this was a period of rapidly expanding drug experimentation by them, with the addition of the psychedelic substances into the continuing pattern of general social drug usage. Further, it is clear that these new substances were being used for more than just social purposes, but rather as a part of the larger quest for meaning within the context of

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[1] Leonard Wolf, ed., Voices From the Love Generation (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), 79-93.

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a new social and cultural movement, the hippies.

In January 1967 at the Golden Gate Park, the hippie era officially celebrated its emergence into public awareness in the USA with the first "Human Be-In."[1] Some estimates of this gathering of the "tribes" run as high as fifty thousand. Allen Ginsburg came to chant the sacred Hindu "Om." Tim Leary preached the gospel of "turn on, tune in, drop out." Many other celebrated beatniks came to pass the torch on to the rising new generation of hippies. Local figures in various Haight-Ashbury movements and institutions such as the Diggers, The Psychedelic Shop, etc., demonstrated their capacity to organize and to communicate their messages. And, most important, the mass media reporters and photographers were there to give the event a national hearing and viewing. Stephen was there also, not yet as a visible teacher, but as a vibrating participant. "I was about seven or eight hundred yards away from it and the vibrations were so heavy coming off that thing that my knees were shaking and watery and I had to stop and sit down against a tree for about ten minutes and come on to a psychedelic before I could even walk up to it."[2]

As a natural consequence of this and other events like it in and near the Haight, the summer of 1967 became the "Summer of Love" in San Francisco. Hundreds, even thousands of young people came to the Haight that summer to try the new drugs and to find the new vision.[3]

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[1]Helen S. Perry, The Human Be-In (New York: Basic Books, 1970). An excellent first person account of Haight-Ashbury community during 1966-1967 by a social worker.

[2]Stephen, WSM-Radio interview, Nashville, Tennessee, January 8, 1971. Published in Stephen, The Caravan (New York: Random House, 1972). There are no page numbers in this publication.

[3]Perry, Human Be-In, 5, 8, 16, 70-71, 139, 167-168.

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Bethlehem became Mecca in little less than two years time. Some of the older and quieter members of this underground community left to form rural communes; the new community's fledgling social and cultural institutions were taxed beyond their capacity to function that summer. The Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic rushed into being to meet the growing personal and medical problems arising out of this mass influx of new hippies. Drug experimentation patterns among this population continued to be a mixture of the older social drugs, the new psychedelics, and increasingly, the powerful amphetamines, barbiturates, and even heroin. It was beginning to be a time of drug usage in which the rule was "anything goes." In such a wave of emotional, personal, and cultural upheaval, the potential participants for the Monday Night Class arrived, lived and quested after meaning with drugs.

Upon his return to San Francisco in the fall of 1966, Stephen also returned to teaching at San Francisco State. No longer was he a member of the faculty of the English Department, but rather a community instructor in the Experimental College.[1] He called his first semester, "Group Experiments in Unified Field Theory." The title reflects the influence of general semantics theory as taught to Stephen by S. I. Hayakawa, and also the speculative social theories made popular among the young and other intellectuals interested in communication by Buckminster Fuller and Marshal McLuhan. But from all of Stephen's references to the beginning of the Monday Night Class,

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[1]Stephen Gaskin, "The Group Head," Motive (November, 1969), 10-13.

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the energy for the class and the major experience under discussion was acid. Especially after his twenty-sixth trip Stephen had not only continued his frequent drug experiences but also had begun to talk to others about theirs. The class formalized this conversation.

They met each Monday evening in the Gallery Lounge at San Francisco State. The Experimental College had assigned them this time because it was open; from this fortuitous accident of their meeting time, they became known as "The Monday Night Class". Even after they left San Francisco State they continued to meet at this time and to refer to themselves as the Monday Night Class. For the first published collection of Stephen's lectures he also picked this title for the book. Names were very significant to them; they especially liked to have proper names for their group activities to "fall on them," rather than making one for themselves.

Stephen laughingly recalled that the first semester was not a statistical success. "We began with twelve students, but by the end of the term there were six left."[1] Stephen's general comments about the growth and development of this class imply steady, incremental additions to the class were the case during the remainder of this year. By the end of the fourth semester, when they left the Experimental College during the spring protests and riots of 1968 at San Francisco State, they reported growth until there were probably around a hundred participants in the class.

The changes in the new course title give a sense of the direction

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[1]Family interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

of their developing discussions each Monday night. Second semester, Stephen called his course "Magic, Einstein and God." Here the religious concern emerges publicly. The next semester was "North American White Witchcraft." Stephen always laughed when he recalled that title. The last semester's title also had an ironic, humorous tone to it, "Meta P.E." Upon leaving San Francisco State they never gave another course title to what they were doing, preferring to be called simply the Monday Night Class. These titles reflect a growing attempt to understand and to control the impact of psychedelic experience upon their lives. It was a time of experimenting with ideas and drugs; a time for "checking out" their experiences together. They were facing together the basic religious and magical processes upon which the universe worked. In their discussions they were seeking for themselves a new consensus based upon ancient religious teachings and modern scientific models.

That spring Stephen moved his class to the Glide Urban Center in the Glide Memorial Methodist Church in downtown San Francisco.[1] This urban church was quite well known among the hip community for its supportive social service work in the nearby Haight-Ashbury district and its attempts to interpret this movement to other sectors in the city during several crises. The class remained there, meeting each Monday evening, throughout the summer, fall, and winter of 1968-69. They report that the average attendance grew to four hundred each week. In March 1969 they moved back into the Haight-Ashbury district into the famous Straight Theater at the end of Haight Street.

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[1] Stephen, "The Group Head," 12.

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They recall the next three months as a tumultuous but significant period of growth for the class and of Stephen's acceptance as a religious teacher in the hip scene. Again the class size doubled, totaling eight hundred.

In May of that year they found the Straight Theater sealed up by the owner. Fortunately for them, Chet Helms, a rock concert promoter, had just opened a new rock ballroom in a large skating rink near the ocean on the Great Highway. Here the Monday Night Class came to rest for its longest stay and enjoyed its largest growth. In early 1970, when I first observed the class, average attendance was nearly a thousand persons each evening. Some evenings the meetings had as many as fifteen hundred in attendance. They remained in this facility until they left San Francisco in October 1970.

The psychedelic experience continued to be the touchstone for Stephen's evolving teachings, his emergence as a teacher, and the reshaping of his life-style. In June 1968, a collective drug trip shared by Stephen and Margaret with two of their close friends, Michael and Ina May, produced their common telepathic sense that they had become one group marriage. They accepted this and immediately began to transform their sexual, social and personal living patterns to make their four-way marriage a reality in all ways.[1]

By the spring of 1969, they had begun to simplify their drug using patterns with a full or exclusive utilization of only marihuana and the high-energy psychedelics. Sometime during 1968-69 they began

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, May 11, 1970.

to distribute "The Cigarette Paper" which encouraged giving up tobacco smoking.[1] Also by this time, they began to share their own experiences of group marriage as a part of Stephen's teachings. They had reprinted an article by Thad and Rita Ashby on "The Yoga of Sex and the Magic Mushroom," which described the Tantric Buddhist sexual practices for spiritual liberation.[2] They saw their own group marriage as a form of tantric practice. It is not clear to me when they quit using beer, wine, and liquor, but by October 1969, Stephen considered any drinking of these substances around him as disrespectful. Also during this same period of time they had stopped using the common social stimulants, tea and coffee. In one report from the summer of 1969, however, Stephen was asked about how much acid he was using.[3] He reported that he had had approximately two hundred acid trips by then, and that it was his usual practice at that time to take acid once a week, as Tim Leary did. There are indications that by this time they also were practicing vegetarians. In summary, during this period of developing the Monday Night Class, Stephen and his family had broken with the general patterns of social drug usage in the USA, and in their vegetarianism, their group marriage, and their concentrated usage of psychedelic sub-

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[1]Stephen, "The Cigarette Paper," distributed at Monday Night Class meetings in spring and summer, 1969.

[2]Thad and Rita Ashby, "The Yoga of Sex and the Magic Mushroom," Oracle of Southern California, November, 1967.

[3]"Stephen Gaskin, The Monday Night Class," an interview in The San Francisco Oracle, summer, 1969, 3, 4, 6.

stances they had embarked on creating a new pattern of living based in the psychedelic experience.

As fresh, colorful, and hopeful as the hip movement in the Haight-Ashbury had seemed as it prepared for the "summer of love" in 1967, that which had gone wrong that summer was the dominant ethos by the summer of 1969.[1] Since 1966, federal regulations, then laws, then state laws had been passed to control the usage of various psychedelics. Next, the psychedelics were subjected to a "chromosome controversy" during 1968-69, when preliminary biochemical research had suggested that LSD-type drugs altered human genetic materials. Sophisticated users had continuing access to these substances, but the newly arrived young users were falsely sold other psychoactive substances as psychedelics, and later they changed their preferences to the more easily available amphetamines and barbituates. By the summer of 1969, the drug of choice that was producing the problems in the Haight was the older nemesis of poor peoples' ghettos, heroin.

Those persons like Stephen who were still in San Francisco and concerned about these changes tried to pull together many community leaders and social service resources that summer in a group called The Commons.[2] It was to be a new beginning, a new center of organizing energy for communal events, service institutions, communications,

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[1] A close-up view on the changes from 1968 to 1970 in Haight-Ashbury drug scene is found in David E. Smith and John Luce, Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

[2] "Stephen Gaskin," an interview in The San Francisco Oracle, October 1969, 5.

and shared communal leadership. It met several times during that summer and into the early fall at the Family Dog, but I am unaware of any lasting institutional successes for this new organizing effort.

One communal event that was organized in part by Stephen that fall, and may well have involved The Commons, was the first "Holy Man Jam."[1] This event occurred in early October. It was a three-evening marathon presentation of many of the "holy men" who had come into public view in the San Francisco area. Tim Leary and Alan Watts were two of the nationally known participants, but there were many local spiritual teachers representing Eastern religious traditions or Western esoteric disciplines, or like Stephen, the psychedelic experience itself. For two evenings one holy man after another spoke, chanted, led meditation, or whatever at the Family Dog. Stephen had a vision while on an acid trip, and had worked hard in this event to project the "oneness" of the spiritual quest by having all kinds of teachers appear together on the same stage at the same time. By the end of that month, however, Stephen had decided to stop meeting with the Commons, or teaching the Monday Night Class. Instead he chose to withdraw to pursue his own spiritual quest with his family.

He announced his decision on Monday, October 20, 1969, and audience reaction was strong and mixed, according to the San Francisco Good Times. The fundamental issue was one of "respect." Stephen no

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[1] "Holy Man Jam," The San Francisco Oracle, November, 1969, .6-7.

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longer felt the Monday Night Class was spiritually serious in its gatherings. He announced that he would begin to hold Sunday morning meetings for those who wanted a spiritual meeting.

> I've been serving communion Monday nights for four years now. But the thing with the Family Dog had become rather a social occasion. The Dog is open six nights a week for social occasions. Moving to Sunday morning is making a statement that this is going to be a church. Monday night (at the Dog) was a cute thing, but communion is not a thing I care to be cute about.[1]

Stephen also felt that his counseling of rock and roll bands which he and his family had put a lot of time into doing was not producing the spiritual results for which he hoped. He was critical of the usage of themes of violence by some rock and roll bands in their music. Also he felt that his own development as a teacher was not being taken seriously by some in the class.

> I'm not just randomly pushing in the direction of good vibes. For me to pretend like I'm not a teacher is a lie. I'm a bird and my song is teaching. It is impossible to impart spirit to someone who is arguing with you. The only way you can find out what kind of a trip I'm on is to go on it.[2]

For the next two months there was no Monday Night Class. Stephen met with a few of his closest followers on Sunday mornings at various places in and around San Francisco. He chose to go off drugs completely for awhile. He had also done this during the three months earlier in the year while teaching at the Straight Theater.[3]

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[1] "Winter in the Park," The San Francisco Good Times, October 23, 1969, 4.

[2] "Winter in the Park," 5.

[3] Family interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

Soon the family convinced him that he had less ego when he smoked some grass, but he did not take any acid from that time forward of his own volition. They got rid of many of their possessions, and left the apartment in the Haight-Ashbury where they lived together since the group marriage began. During this period they purchased an old school bus and converted it into their own mobile home. They spent a lot of time outside the city in the nearby mountains. Stephen sought to purify his life and increase the level of his spiritual integration. Soon he returned to drinking some peyote tea. At this time he taught that at least for him and his family, they would only regularly use organic drugs, e.g. peyote, magic mushrooms, and marihuana. Stephen believed that he had moved beyond the acid experience. He had learned what it had to teach him, and he should not be using it as just an energy source. Acid had been a breakthrough experience for him and would be for others, but after a while one had to go on one's own energy if one wished to continue one's spiritual development. Grass and peyote would be enough to help him stay loose of developing ego, and telling the Truth was enough to keep getting him spiritually higher.

Stephen, however, was destined to take another acid trip in May 1970.[1] Stephen had begun holding his Monday meetings again in late December, 1969. At this Monday Night Class, a small girl offered him a piece of home-made candy. By this time, Stephen did not usually eat sweets, but he did accept and eat this little girl's proffered

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, May 4, 1970.

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gift. Thirty minutes or so into the evening's discussion, he recognized the psychological changes in himself which meant he was beginning an acid trip. He continued his class for awhile, but finally he realized that he should withdraw before the full effect of the psychedelic drug came upon him. He and his family went in their bus to a parking lot on the Great Highway near the ocean beach, and there Stephen tripped for most of the night.

The next Monday Night Class began with an air of anticipation for all wondered how he had responded to his acid trip last week. Stephen reported that it had been a heavy trip, and that it had been a week of significant change for him and his family as they worked to integrate this experience. First, Stephen announced that he wanted to know everybody's full name. "Like everybody I know I want you to tell me your whole full name. And I'm going to call you by that, because diminutives diminish. Dig?"[1] Stephen's wife had always been called "Maggie" until then, but henceforth she was addressed as "Margaret." Another change had been that Stephen had given up wearing his glasses. He felt that they had given him too strong a clarity about things that were far away, so that they tempted him out of paying close attention to the here-and-now. The final revelation, which was made less of this first evening, but became more important in later references to this accidental trip, was that this acid experience had confirmed his insight that he was not to take

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, May 11, 1970.

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any more acid.[1] So that even though this accidental dosage had provided him with new energy for personal changes of spiritual significance, it had also spiritually confirmed his sense that he had moved beyond acid in his quest.

Since re-starting the Monday Night Class at the Family Dog, Stephen had continued to regularize and to simplify his life as a religious teacher. In addition to continuing the Monday Night Class meetings, Sunday Services became a weekly occurrence for the inner-circle of his followers, too. In October, November, and December of 1969 it had been a peripatetic occasional meeting at different places and different times each Sunday. Early in 1970, Stephen settled into a regular sunrise service in Sutro Park directly behind the Family Dog near the oceanfront. During the week he visited with increasing frequency a group of his students on a farm near Santa Rosa who were transcribing and editing his lectures for their first publication, Monday Night Class.[2] They continued to live a four-marriage on their school bus, The Santa Fe, and he increased the number of meetings, media appearances, and other forms of teaching interactions with people who did not come to the Monday Night Class, but who were interested in understanding this new religious movement. Except for the accidental acid trip in May, Stephen and his family since October 1969

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[1] University of Missouri Meeting, Columbia, Missouri, January 12, 1971, reported in The Caravan.

[2] Stephen, Monday Night Class (Santa Rosa, California: Book Farm, 1970).

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had used only marihuana and peyote. They did not use any other drug substances of a social or medicinal type at all. Aspirin, for instance, was to be avoided. Stephen often spoke against the growing use of heroin and various amphetamines among the street peoples. His condemnation of the usage of alcohol, depressants, and tobacco was complete, and none of his followers ever used them in his presence. For him the standard now was clear; only psychedelic drugs were useful. He understood that others might use acid for good purpose, but he encouraged mainly the usage of organic psychedelics.

The Psychedelic Vision

In that brief recital of their early history, psychedelic drug experience played a formative role in the development of the Monday Night Class. The use to which they put their drug experiences is the key to further understanding of them. Through their usage they created a religious interpretation of psychedelic experience, the regular Monday night meetings, and a common religious vision of the universe, a Sacred Cosmos.

I begin this study of their psychedelic vision with the presentation of several cases in Stephen's history in which specific drug experiences were used to change his living patterns. Each of these instances provided insight into the situation and energy for effecting immediate changes. Following these, I report three Monday Night Classes which I observed during the spring of 1970. Each is illustrative of the way in which these meetings functioned as a

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time and a place for myth-making. In the meetings, under Stephen's guidance, the class members searched for common agreements about the fundamental realities of life, and for confirmation of this vision in their religious feelings within these meetings. Finally, I briefly sketch their vision of the Sacred Cosmos as Stephen expressed it for them in his teachings. This sketch begins with a discussion of some of the religious and secular sources for his teachings, and concludes with a paraphrased report of elements in their belief system. The latter is illustrated with quotations drawn from Stephen's published writings from this time period.

Holy Encounters

On May 11, 1970 at the Monday Night Class, I heard Stephen's report of his accidental acid trip of the previous Monday evening.[1] He told his students that he would now only use full proper names for people, and also that he had given up wearing his glasses to overcome his "addiction" to a high visual stimulation index. He talked at great length about his more complete understanding of his group marriage. He recalled how this had just "fallen" on them, when over two years earlier they had shared a common drug experience.

On that evening as they were tripping together Stephen had gone to the kitchen to get a drink of water and on an impulse had brought back a large brass bowl full of water and ice cubes so all four could drink.

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[1] Monday Night Class, San Francisco, May 11, 1970. Until otherwise noted the quotations in this discussion are from this meeting.

> Sat it down in the middle of us. And we started getting higher and higher, and higher, and pretty soon there was this intense light coming off the bowl of water. And we felt and knew--this is the first time I've ever said this--but I felt and knew at the time that that bowl of water was us and that we could all drink from it. . . . We sat around the bowl of water and we agreed that it was good and we would all drink. And we were married then. Except that we were afraid to cop to it out loud. All this went on telepathically.

Later that same evening they did tell each other what they felt happened, and since then they had "made it manifest on the material plane."

On this recent acid experience Stephen felt he had learned even more about how his "tantric marriage" worked.

> It's a magical marriage, spiritual, and it has to do with the way you manifest the material plane. How you make the material plane happen. Cause we all make the material plane happen. But there are ways you can do it that really help. And what you need in order to manifest is energy and structure. Force and form, juice and shape, you know.

He explained that Michael, the other male member of the "four-marriage," was really good at form, while Stephen had lots of energy, force.

> He's hip to form in a way beyond anything I can really get into. In the same way I am in to energy, and we can between us--we are working on the basis as it says in the scriptures, "When two of you become as one you can move mountains." Or, "If any two of you should agree on anything it shall be done." And I think the way the universe works is that we can do anything we want to with the material plane, as long as we get agreement to do it. . . . Manifest, you know; we make manifest what happens.

He concluded that since this marriage he had been able to integrate a great deal more of life than before they were living together. Specifically, he said the Monday Night Class had grown from around two hundred persons to nearly fifteen hundred each Monday since then.

He related this insight about his marriage to how the psychedelic experience itself taught him to understand the process of mani-

festing.

> Direct manifestation is transubstantiation. When you have an ego-death on acid--that's the thing about acid; acid kills you. And you put yourself back together. . . . Because that's just what it is. People want to know what is acid. Acid is life and death. Acid is transubstantiation, if you get there. And it is the way, whether you know it or not is the thing. And so what you can do is, some people can build an alternate universe and not look at it when it happens and then not cop to it when its over. But like its real.

With the concept of "manifesting" Stephen related the psychedelic experience to creating and to changing your reality. At another meeting of the class on June 1, 1970, he succinctly stated this theme of drugs and fundamental change.[1] Drug experience had made him aware that transubstantiation was a human power. "I've changed my form over the last eight years. I'm not a bit like I was." This was the way he understood Jesus' healing miracles; they were "instant transubstantiation."

> He made manifest in the here-and-now what he wanted. Anyone can do it if you are really here-and-now. I think I've seen that on acid. It should be reverenced because it is the center of every religion. It happens anytime people are pure and real.

On another occasion he quoted Jesus' saying "To take no thought of tomorrow."[2] He cited this statement in support of his belief that in general one should continue to relax and just manifest what is right there in front of you. Life should be lived on "automatic pilot"

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, June 1, 1970.

[2]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, April 16, 1970.

such as you breathe. "Reality is neater than anything you're thinking, because it is there." Even though the psychedelic experience had given them insight into their fundamental power to change, nevertheless, it had also provided them with a trust of the created order in the universe.

Another case in point was the creation of the Holy Man Jam.[1] Stephen was quite pleased with this gathering of all the religious teachers together for a meeting in October, 1969. The idea for this event had come to him on an acid trip. He recalled that as he thought more about this his drug experience got better and better. Then he knew that it was a good idea, grounded in reality, and that with this energy he had he could manifest it. Right then he had started telephoning various religious teachers and asking them to come, and within ten days the first Holy Man Jam happened.

These specific drug experiences had provided Stephen with the energy and the insight to transform parts of his life. The Family were married through a shared drug experience. He called forth the first Holy Man Jam from an acid trip; he learned the wisdom of only using full proper names and of giving up his glasses from his accidental acid experience. Above all, he continued to report to his students his growing understanding of how the universe worked, as it had been shown him in his psychedelic experiences, and confirmed in their own. Consequently, the major social outcome of their individual drug experiences was the gathering of the Monday Night Class itself. For Stephen

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, April 16, 1970.

and his students this weekly meeting for sharing and discussing their lives and their drug usage had become the central social occurrence of each week. There the individual's drug experiences were conceptually located within a general religious interpretation of the way the universe worked. To illustrate the various topics discussed, the general character and format of the meetings observed, and their understanding of the purpose for which they met, I present the following descriptions of three meetings which I attended in the spring of 1970.

The Family Dog

Their meeting place was the Family Dog, a rock and roll ballroom, located on the Great Highway which parallels the ocean beach at the western edge of San Francisco. At the northern end of this two to three mile stretch of beach is a five or six block amusement area called Playland at the Beach. The building now used as the ballroom was originally built as a large roller skating rink. During 1969 Chester Helms, a local rock music promoter, rented this space, and with minimal structural changes, it became the Family Dog Ballroom.

The building was a simple warehouse-like structure. It had a partial circular single span arch covering most of the enclosed space. It was painted golden brown outside. Inside it was mainly white with one end of the room painted in a colorful rainbow. The former skating area was used as the main meeting space. It was a rectangular space approximately two hundred feet in length and seventy-five feet in width; the arched ceiling rose forty feet at the apex. Rooms for offices, dressing rooms, bathrooms, etc. were around the perimeter of this single large space. The front entrance was two sets of large doors

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facing the highway and the ocean. In the rear another set of doors opened onto a small enclosed patio. Although there was usually theatrical lighting equipment around, Stephen's meetings were always evenly and brightly lighted by regular house-lights.

Stephen taught from a small platform, about eight feet square raised about a foot or two above the floor level. A solid wooden panel behind the platform extended from the floor to the balcony level. There was no special lighting focused on the platform, and Stephen did not use public address system. He sat cross-legged, usually on a quilted sleeping bag folded to form a cushion. His family sat immediately in front of him facing him as the first row of the audience. The platform was in the middle of the longer side of the rectangular room. The audience sat on the floor in a semi-circle around the platform, spreading out to fill most of the available floor space. The size of the crowd varied during my period of observation; it was never below six hundred, and by early summer it seemed closer to twelve hundred. The average attendance was at least nine hundred persons.

The March 16, 1970 Meeting[1]

The description of this meeting illustrates the recurring themes of how they understood the psychedelic experience and the class meeting itself. In both instances Stephen presented the way he understood how each worked for their personal and collective spiritual development. These two themes wove in and out of the

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, March 16, 1970. The following account and quotations come from my field notes and an audio-tape of this meeting.

center of this evening's dialogue throughout the first half of this Monday Night Class meeting.

Stephen came in, sat down, and began by blowing on a hollowed-out cow's horn. Michael and one of the wives would blow on other natural horns or sea shells at this time, too. The audience would chant the "Om" associated with the Hindu religion. After a few minutes Stephen put aside his horn but vocally led us in the chanting. This usually lasted for eight to ten minutes; the "Omming" sound resonated throughout the building without stopping for the whole period. At the end of a time period which seemed good to Stephen, the Omming slowly diminished into silence. Stephen sat in silence looking out over the crowd for another several minutes before he spoke.

He began by collecting some impromptu "statistics" from the audience. The first question concerned drugs and religious experience. He asked for a show of hands of all those who had had a religious experience without drugs. About one hundred persons raised their hands. Then he said, "with marihuana?" Several raised their hands, but many fewer. "LSD?" Most persons there raised their hands. There was laughter. "Mescaline" and "Peyote" produced another scattering of hands. Then he asked about the ages of persons present. "How many are here between fifteen and twenty-five?" This seemed to produce the largest response. "twenty-Five and thirty?" Fewer hands went up this time.

Then Stephen stopped. He said that there was too much "hollering". There was a man who called out "Stephen" and began to debate this. Stephen said "Fred" loudly and overrode this debate with his comment that Fred was engaged in an "energy trip" that was just a

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"ripoff" from the collective efforts of our meeting. Stephen went on to insist that they were making an effort to raise the common "vibration". Then he asked how many persons were here for the first time; about fifty hands went up. By the time there were probably five hundred people gathered and many still drifting in through the front doors. Stephen continued that they aimed at the highest common denominator of man as the goal for these meetings. In any language that was "God".

He then went into an analysis of the transaction between Fred and himself so that the class would see what was happening.

> To take my attention by calling me my name isn't fair. I'll tell you how I work. I don't run a long memory string, because I can't. Like my attention is in the here-and-now. And like my yoga is to maintain my attention in the here-and-now.

He further explained that what he usually did at the beginning of a class was a short "rap" that he had thought-out before he came as a way to help the class get together. He said as in tantric yoga, a couple needed about twenty minutes of sexual play to just get their energy together with each other. After this opening rap then the class could go on about what has the most "juice" in it.

Stephen then asked himself the rhetorical question "what are we doing here?" He answered this with an analysis of what was to happen in the meeting.

> What we do here is a ceremony called communion. That's the first thing we do. Like I'm supposed to like guide us toward that. There's a certain kind of path that you do from like a scattered head to communion. That has a certain sort of questions and answers down it and it almost gets to be that there's got to be this certain exchange of questions and answers on the way to that communion. It's when you've done something long enough that it begins to become a ceremony.

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> The ceremony is the oldest that we gather and that we gather with a common purpose. Read a piece of scripture today and it said a thing about "Trusting to the conscience of all men in the sight of God," which is to say we all really know what's going on.

A group of young blacks who had wandered in and "Fred", too, all got up about this time and left the meeting. Stephen immediately noted this by saying "They're cool, ain't mad, just bored." Then he shifted back to his explanation of what was going on in the meeting each week by telling some of his personal story.

He said he didn't start out on a "God" trip. His family did a lot of moving around when he was a kid. Once he asked who was Jesus. His mother had replied that he was a good man who lived long ago. Stephen now felt this was a complete devaluation of Jesus. So he concluded that he had no "religious upbringing" at all. He enjoyed Aldous Huxley and Bertrand Russell, but when Huxley became openly mystical he wondered. Then he heard of his mescaline "trips" and he thought "Aha, blew his mind with dope." The audience laughed heartily at this. He was really kind of an agnostic. He flirted some with existentialism, but that was too heavy. He went to church a couple of times. Then he recalled for them the first time a friend of his turned him on with "grass". He experienced being telepathic with this mar and was convinced the other guy felt it, also when he winked at him. Next he used psychedelic drugs and began "to do a lot of LSD." The first twenty-five trips were really just energy "rip-offs" because of bad people, environment and his own expectations. Then he got some really strong "Acid" on the twenty-sixth trip and it pushed him into "Christ-consciousness" where he realized that "Spirit" was real, At the time he didn't really understand but he had experi-

enced a real spiritual "un-self-conscious", no ego at all. Afterwards he learned how to get into really "high" places by making decisions more and more rapidly while on acid. Instead of wasting all the drug experience's energy, he began to use it to explore the world of Spirit and how it worked. For Stephen this was how the questions and the answers they did in the meeting worked. They helped them together solve a person's problem, achieve a better agreement, and share energy with each other.

At this point Stephen said, "Let's shift to questions. What's on your mind right now?" One questioner asked about what you should eat? Especially whether it was good to eat meat or not? At this time Stephen expressed a fairly relaxed attitude towards diet. He mentioned first that he did decide to take off his cowboy boots that used to be standard for him because of the killing of cattle for leather, but he still kept them around at home. "You got to make a balance." In your interaction with the world what you are seeking was a good "karmic" relationship. "Everything I ever got off of, I got off of because I found out it slowed me down in some way. And I've got off of things up to and including dope." He recounted how he and the family went off dope completely for two and a half months earlier that fall, but then he felt he was getting "less smart" so he started doing grass and a little peyote tea again. Above all else whatever decisions you make about your living, truth is the most important yoga. "Just tell the truth."

Someone asked how you find truth. Stephen said that this was a yoga in itself, i.e. "the yoga of discrimination." He felt that

it was a hard yoga, but you just had to keep "scratching" after it.

Another person asked what he thought about Jesus and his "one god trip?" Stephen responded that when Jesus came there were a lot of corrupt religious fragments which people were into, so that his "one god trip" was good because it included all people. He believed that Jesus really was preaching a form of unity even though later followers have turned it into an "exclusion thing."

Stephen paused, straightened up his back and appeared to withdraw for a moment of meditation. By this time people were getting crowded by the front doors, so he asked all of us to move closer together so there would be more room for others.

Stephen commented that we could be "stoned" as with drugs, by just sitting there together in quiet. The reason for this is that our heads feel out into the environment beyond our bodies, so as we sat there we overlapped our "energy fields." "I try to be you, just relax into you." Being this close we could be one. The beginning of the evening was a "speedy" experience for Stephen as he opened up to the crowd. The "weirder frequencies" were strong then, but they damped out as we came to agreement. He recommended that we should just open up and receive the vibrations that came in order to help each other get it together.

There was a question about how to balance your life, especially the relationships among your drug usage, your yoga and your friends. Stephen stated that some of his friends felt he was getting so strict that he was leaving them behind. He reminded them that dope was not just an "energy source" it was a "sacrament." He contrasted the social ritual associated with drinking alcohol

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and smoking grass. When a person drinks a lot, he goes off in a corner by himself, but he shares grass with others as he smokes by passing it around. In Stephen's view this gentle ritual was part of the high. Yoga done together could also be a communion. Mike had pointed out in the Family how the passing of a "joint" was really a mudra, a religious gesture in Hindu ritual. Therefore, Stephen advised that even if you don't smoke grass, pass it on with ritual respect, don't refuse to be part of the group ritual. He thought peyote has a nice ritual to it also. In the psychedelic scene they had to build a ritual for LSD, said Stephen so they borrowed a lot from the Indians and their peyote ritual.

As he said earlier, there was a time when he went off dope for awhile. The Family did a lot of yoga, hot baths; they got pretty high. The Family was Stephen's energy source; they talked a lot together. The Family convinced him that he was more compassionate when doing some grass. So he finally smoked again and he got high as on LSD. While discussing what it meant to be high, Stephen referred to food as a drug. "Food produces a psychedelic state we call 'life'". This was why he doesn't worry about being dependent on dope. Referring back to his earlier comment about getting off of things that slow one down he said "I've not as yet arrived at a place where dope brings me down." He elaborated this thought. "Dope by itself is anything you want it to be. You can manifest anything you want to on dope. . . . It takes character and integrity to get high on acid or not on acid." Stephen talked of the "road chief" in the Indian's peyote ritual. From his viewpoint, the road chief was the

person who travels with the dope. The road chief is important because to manifest a world in a spiritually correct way takes personal character. You have to have good karma to really get good dope, because it obeys the laws of the spirit. Stephen believed that this was a continuing spiritual chain just as the blessing of Peter continues via apostolic succession even through popes who did not believe. So you could get high on acid from "street dealers" if your karma was good.

Another sequence of questions and answers returned again to how the Monday Night Class works and why. "I think of this as a conversation that persists from week to week." Each week started with blowing the horn and chanting "Om" because that is the rock-bottom simple ritual. All just open their mouth and participate. Stephen spoke of his own role as teacher. He said that there is a lot of helpful cultural stuff in me. "I can't do anything about it unless you ask. The people here have to get to know me so that I'm predictable enough so you can get into me, then I can be helpful." Stephen pointed out that there are at least twenty to forty new people each Monday for the first time. They have to learn who we are. That was why he did the "statistics" tonight to give each other some indication of where we all come from. "I am compelled to talk about what's on the top of my head, because that's the only way I can stay high by talking about what's on the top of my head." Through this kind of conversation with Stephen as the focus, the class learned what it needed to know each evening.

A questioner asked about "subconscious". Stephen talked of

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discovering what is in your "subconscious". He said among other things that one just has to relax and let your mind go so that it "bubbles up stuff" from the subconscious. Then you can select from this material different things and say "that is bullshit; I don't believe that." Stephen believed all of us have a subconscious. He thought that a lot of people had put stuff into us before we tried to do anything about it, so now we have to relax and just sort it out. You need others to help you do this, because by definition these materials were below your consciousness i.e. "subconscious." This meant you sometimes have to help others see their subconscious by speaking "shitty judgments" about them.

"What about art?" Stephen paused and then said that art was a "mixed bag." It could be very spiritual in his opinion when Jerry Garcia leads the Grateful Dead rock and roll band to the point of where they are so involved they became selfless.

> When the Dead really gets it together and makes that incredible machine that he can get on top of and do that thing, you know, he's selfless then; really because he's doing it so good, and has his attention into it so fully into what he's doing that he's in there in the music; you know, he's not outside pointing at it; you know, he's all inside, and that's an art place where like art is fine; you know, that's really communion.

For Stephen this was good art that can get the listener "high". Other bands use their art to "rip" energy off of the audience for themselves, as with an uneven beat ever so often just to catch attention. There were value judgments Stephen believed that one must make about art. Recently he looked at an erotic art book based on Hindu temple images of the gods engaged in ritual sexual activity.

He felt this was quite "a mixed bag" for Americans. "It can be a turn-up the stimuli problem." This culture was already too heavily weighted towards aggressive male sexuality. For instance, he said if you look at the phallic symbols this is problematic but some of the other temple images made him feel very relaxed. The latter images could be useful in 1970 because of the sheer population density. Stephen concluded that we needed images of sexual activity that would reduce friction among us.

Briefly he answered questions about freedom of life-style, birth control, and drugs as a "weapon." Stephen said that he chose to live as a "beatnik" because it was the only way to come on really honest in the United States now. He argued against birth-control because the real problem was industrial technology and politics, not the number of people who need to eat.

> "We aren't together. Then the choices about that kind of thing, who gets fed and that sort of thing, will be made on the basis of compassion instead of on the basis of politics."

Stephen affirmed dope as a tool, teacher and ally not a weapon against anybody. He thought that you should not force it on anyone or give it to someone without their knowledge because it was always to be taken as a freewill choice.

A woman asked Stephen to tell about himself, his family, why they do this, and what changes they experienced? Again Stephen retold the story of his family, their marriage experience on acid, his twenty-sixth acid trip, and how he had learned to understand the basic reality of the universe. It was an autobiographical litany of the impact of the psychedelic experience on their reli-

gious development. I was to hear it repeated many times, especially in meetings with people outside of the Monday Night Class.

> Among other things I saw was how the universe works, including like the material plane, and the rules of the material plane are fairly simple, if you are patient enough to follow them. The reason most people have any trouble with the material plane at all is because they're rushing it. If you relax, the material plane will give you what you need as you go along if you don't push it. If you push it, you shut it off and it gets scarce.

He believed that this was also the inner meaning of Jesus' saying that "To them who have it will be given; from those who don't it will be taken". What they were looking for in the class was a "loose" life-style that worked. Stephen said this is not just a set of rules. He had read a lot of the old scriptures from various religions and he discovered that they talked of the same path that he discovered through the psychedelic experience. The experience of telepathy while on acid had suggested to him some of the basic ground rules of human relations, also. To be in each others' minds implied a set of etiquette. "There's certain kinds of telepathic ego trips, and power trips that you just don't do, because it messes up the head too bad."

Another idea about the class came to him from understanding "rhythm". Here Stephen drew on the example of stepping in a river. He felt that if you learn to move with it, then you are inexorable. "Sometimes I'm in it, sometimes I'm not, but now I'm not so impatient. I let it happen. . . . The most piece of my yoga has been the class. . . . Interacting with this many people once a week means that once a week I got to make some attempt to get my shit together." The class always needed more progress according to

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Stephen and that was why it was best to use a "God-based" trip. When you tried to do anything from the spiritual plane, Stephen believed that then you could "go for broke", because you were not involved in the entropy of the material plane. He explained that the natural forces are in pairs. The opposite to entropy is life. Both of these together form a stable universal system. These are like "Yin and Yang" the Oriental positive and negative metaphysical force. He concluded, therefore, the material plane is not separate from us as the living persons; we created it as a part of our agreed upon "movie." Life is eternal, for it is spiritual.

Again and again in this meeting Stephen was asked to address the themes of how the Monday Night Class meetings "worked", and of how psychedelic drugs "worked." During my observation of this community this pattern of questioning was common. Although Stephen's approach to answering varied considerably, his fundamental strategy for responding is clear in this March sixteenth meeting. Stephen believed that they work on the same principles on which the universe works. This was the principle that the "spiritual planes" run the "material planes" of existence. This was what Stephen "saw" on his twenty-sixth LSD experience, and this had continued to be confirmed as he read religious scriptures, as he had other drug experiences, and as he taught each class meeting.

Psychedelic drugs had stimulated in Stephen and his students an experience of the capacities of their minds beyond what they had been taught to expect in contemporary American culture. In the discovery that "Spirit is Real," Stephen found in religious traditions and symbols the means for linking this overwhelming personal experi-

ence to the fundamental conditions of human existence in the universe. He "saw" in his psychedelic experiences through his religious insight "how the universe worked."

This symbolic linkage between drug experience and religious understanding gave him the tools for analyzing the mental powers of the self and the religious meaning of the Monday Night Class. In this meeting he discussed the power of human telepathy and the power for manifesting what you want by focusing your mental attention in the here-and-now. He warned of the distorting and destructive power of the subconscious. He characterized the purpose of their meetings in terms of religious significance i.e. communion, ceremony, and ritual. He referred to drugs as sacraments. He used other Eastern and Western religious symbols in his analysis of the human condition, such as: karma, yoga, mudra, ying-yang, God and Jesus. For Stephen and his students, their drug experiences came alive for them when they were recognized by them as an encounter with the Holy, the fundamental spiritual life of the universe. Since then in the Monday Night Class meetings they had gathered under Stephen's guidance to work out the meaningful implications of this holy encounter in their understanding of the world and for the living of their lives.

The May 18, 1970 Meeting[1]

This meeting is an example of a typical meeting in which the

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[1]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, May 18, 1970. The following account and quotations come from my field notes and an audiotape of this meeting.

topics covered seemed more random. They ranged from questions about the most cosmic general matters to specific discussion of some of the behavioral basics in living. By this time in the spring of 1970, Stephen had dispensed with a long opening speech, and, after the opening chant, he went directly to questions. What follows is my paraphrasing of Stephen speaking that evening, punctuated with some significant quotations. The first questioner asked about Zen meditation.

Zen meditation is to just let the thoughts go through with no judgment; in contrast, in psychotherapy you tell your thoughts to a man who makes judgments for you. They presume you are sick, while Zen presupposes you are a Buddha. In both to speak out is good. Have no fear of self-damage or loss of status. He talked some of the Zen master at the San Francisco Zen Center, Suzuki Roshi, whom he admires a great deal.

After this Stephen stopped the discussion and said he felt a little tight. "I'm stoned on hash and grass, so lets Om some more till we're loose."

After chanting again there was a long response by Stephen about how apostolic succession works in Zen as opposed to its devaluation in Christianity. "Each Zen Master is supposed to transmit to their disciples and students the mind of Buddha that they have." In contrast the western church has passed along a lot of material things, like buildings, but little of the mind of Christ in the Church today.

He talked of how we devalue language and make it "conceptual". In sanskrit each letter of their alphabet is a significant sound like Om. It is an integration of all vibrations, when we chant it

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we speak truth in spite of ourselves. The way we use metaphors wears them out. This becomes "a turn up the stimuli" problem in language and wastes energy. Don't embellish; "stoned" is just stoned. In our culture we print the Bible and other scriptures the same way we print Mickey Spillane novels. We sell a book of truth alongside a book of prejudice. Early printing was complicated and even handcrafted to show some respect for the word, but no more. Truth is where each word means something. You can speak so each word carries love and truth. Each word is a vibration, and it doesn't work unless love and truth energy is inside of these vibrations. That requires straight-out speaking.

Attention is a form of significant energy for Stephen. "It is just like sunlight." Spirit, energy all is the free grace of God. Some of us have energy-addictions, so instead of freely exchanging energy with others we try to cheat them of theirs. You try to get more out of the exchange than you put in. This is a rip-off, a stealing of energy. He related this to his analysis of the individual's subconscious. "You have this energy-habit so long you have forgotten it". Stuttering can be such a habit. It is a way to make others do a lot of closures for you. Kids can be on these "power trips", too. "If you can't get energy for love then you work on mother to get it for fear, revulsion, etc." These habits have to be made too costly to continue, then a person will do it right. Your subconscious abhors the energy waste when you try to re-learn correctly so it will give up the habit then. Take a lot of acid and you'll get your subconscious clean in about twenty-four hours, but then you

have to keep it clean. Then speak the truth, confess your lies. Then you retrain your "automatic pilot."

He talked about the search for a cultural zero and even the quest for getting back to a pre-verbal reality. "The Zen master is the Japanese cultural zero. Dig this, he is supposed to be the equivalent of a parish priest or a protestant preacher. Imagine that stretch. Our church leaders don't have it; our tradition has been culturally devalued." But even this is not the Homo sapiens zero, that would be pre-verbal, before culture. This is only transmitted from mind to mind. English is especially difficult because it is a two-value language i.e. "either - or". Spiritual truth is even below the cultural zero; it is before the verbal. "Talking after all is an affectation for monkeys; we are purest when our mouths are shut."

Stephen said he believed that the United States of America is coming down because its people have been conditioned to get their way by complaining. "We've gotten affluent, and don't teach our kids how to cope or fend for themselves." By "fend" he meant that you must put back into the system as much as you take out. Then the cultural system would be balanced and alive. This is not, however, like government taxes. "The government takes it out of the system and makes conceptual abstractions out of it; shoots it off of the planet; blows it up, etc."

He said that he had been editing the transcripts of these evenings together for a book. He has to cut a lot of his Southwestern "cowboy" idioms out, because they are a romantic sado-masochistic trip. Instead all should learn to speak the simple truth. "Meta-

phors are a trap." Life requires non-linear thinking. The natural overall pattern should emerge like a gestalt.

He then related the earlier theme about "complaining" to a person's concern about productivity. "Just do everything you do right. No matter how ephemeral." He continued "this is not caring about productivity as the way." He encouraged complete non-attachment to the "fruits" of your labor, because if you don't you'll be lost in your work. "Do your thing then do not care what happens to it. Complaining is a rip-off. Compassionate people no longer pay attention. The universe is to run backward over the complainers. Ten minutes of complaining on acid can get you a black eye."

A questioner asked about magic and sorcery. Stephen commented that this might seem like a "heavy trip" at first, but magic is just "creation". "We are in a new place, building a new thing; we are checking the scriptures out now. At least some of us can do that." Magic is not really "bats, frogs, etc."; it is deciding how it ought to be and putting your energy behind it. Even in the magical phase of your development there is a "sign post" right there that says this way up to higher spiritual things.

Right before the mid-evening break Stephen answered a question about the "city." "It doesn't feel natural now; it takes good yoga just to not get up tight with the city vibrations." Stephen pointed out that the city creates so much vibrations that the sheer quantity alone makes its people uptight. "North Beach has been turning up the stimuli so long that it doesn't know where to go." This is the night life area of downtown San Francisco which features "topless" and "bottomless" dancers in bars. He concluded on a positive note.

"Sometimes, when I come in on a sunny day, it seems right; just need to turn off the paper pushing, competitive games, etc."

He then announced the break, asked people to smoke outside on the patio and laid down his coat on the stage for contributions to help pay the rent to the Family Dog.

After a forty-five minute interlude, the second half of the evening began like the first with the chanting of the "Om" and the blowing of the cow horn and seashells. The opening teachings were in response to questions about "the future" and "idea of karma and revolution." Stephen said the only future is right here-and-now, if we are "cool" now then the future will be cool, too. He placed great emphasis upon staying in the present. "Do it right in the now."

The debate over religious versus the political revolution was a theme that came up often during the spring 1970 sessions. Tonight Stephen was questioned about how the religious idea of karma could be related to social responsibility. Stephen stressed that karma is just but does not justify anything. It is simple cause-and-effect relationships of a moral universe. "You open the door; you must take what comes through." One person sharpened the discussion by citing the example of Vietnamese babies that are burnt by American napalm. How can this be just? Without asserting that it was, Stephen did say that human beings even at an early age can have enough negative karma to be killed. His fundamental thrust in this exchange was that when he looked around and he saw things happen, it

always was just. He gave several illustrations. If you treat a cop like a cop instead of a person, he'll be a cop to you. Life is accurate; karma is simple cause and effect. As a teacher Stephen said he did assume responsibility also for the karma of his students, but only in so far as they did what he said to do.

There was a discussion about personality, ego, and character later. For Stephen our personality was just a "junk-pile" we've picked up at random from the environment. Building character is not the same as building ego. Ego doesn't last after death, but karma as an individual's cause-and-effect does stay in the system and attach itself to a new life. In this sense karma crosses over death, but not your personality or ego.

Stephen was asked about his assessment of Tim Leary. Dr. Leary had been arrested on a drug charge earlier that year and at this time was in a California state prison. Stephen emphasized in his comments both how important Leary had been to the spiritual "acid" revolution, but also how mistaken he had become in turning to politics. Leary earlier that year before his arrest had announced he was going to run for Governor of California in the Democratic Primary on a "legalize marihuana" platform.

Stephen felt that if Leary had stayed pure and out of politics he would never have been arrested. "When you attract the audience like he did then you have to speak truth, pure and high." Politics are problematic in Stephen's view because it is basically an "either/or" system. "War is the extension of politics and the reverse is true, also. It is built on a system of winners and losers." Instead Stephen believed it was possible for Leary to stay on a

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spiritual sort-system where everyone is on the path, and all are going to get there. He cited Leary's article in Playboy magazine where he had talked of "them" and of "us". This was bad for Leary because he was too "heavy" to fall into that. Stephen felt that Leary had done a magnificent thing at Harvard earlier when he and Richard Alpert saw a higher truth through acid and opted for that even at the cost of their jobs. "Leary was a medicine man, and that was an appropriate way to get a lot of acid into the American culture. He taunted the old to get the kids on acid, and we won that revolution. Now we've got to turn on the Old Man, too, because we've all got to live together." He closed this discussion by pointing to this class. "We are the sanest people in the country; we are absorbing much negative vibrations, so we are making a big difference. . . . Leary wanted to be in jail. I'd rather have him on the outside and high."

Again the question of the population problem came up and again Stephen spoke against birth-control. "The lesson is that people need to share. . . . I'm nervous about contraception because babies are the sanest minds on the planet. They hold it all together". High explosives and industrial processes are what is destroying things, if we quit them the air, water, etc. will clear themselves. "San Francisco is the fashion setter now for people to be loving, hip, gentle and to share. That is what we are about, establishing the new norm".

Soon Stephen felt we had talked enough so that he announced the Sunday Service and a Friday meeting. "Friday's meeting is so I can talk to more of you as individuals." Then he suggested we

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chant "Om" until we were "mellowed down" and could leave.

Three of the themes discussed this evening expressed significant cultural insights in Stephen's understanding. Buddhism and Christianity were the two religious traditions to which Stephen referred most often. His positive assessment of Buddhism was often contrasted to his negative belief that the churches had forsaken and forgotten their spiritual founder, Jesus. His analysis of the general problem of human culture presented his insight into the conceptual abstractness of all verbal systems. This led him to affirm that the basic human reality was pre-verbal and non-verbal in its fundamental form. Finally, in his discussion of Dr. Timothy Leary, Stephen expressed his rejection of political revolution in favor of a spiritual one.

The May 25, 1970 Meeting[1]

It was a typical night in topics discussed. During this meeting, however, three political revolutionaries challenged Stephen. Again I paraphrase his responses to questions.

Stephen began the evening by making a brief report of his participation in a "Youth Festival" at the Berkeley High School this

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 25, 1970. The following account and quotations come from my field notes and an audio-tape of this meeting.

last weekend. He reported that most of the speakers talked of "the loss of hope", but he disagreed with them. They had been reflecting on the Kent State University "killings" of four young persons that happened three weeks before. They asked him a lot of questions about why he still did dope. "I told them that I was speaking intelligently to them then, because I had been sipping peyote tea that day. That's the only reason I do it, because it works." Stephen went on to say that LSD for our times was like what Luther did for the Reformation times. "The cat who said lets put the Bible in language that everybody can read." LSD lets all of us personally know that the spiritual level of the world is real. He told them in Berkeley that for these times we are in, the word is still, "Trust in the Lord and let go." This meant to let go of being self-conscious. Trust your involuntary autonomic nervous system. "You trust your automatic equipment to take care of you, then the self-conscious is taking care of the out-front world and not worrying about itself." That in Stephen's view was the same as the "no-mind" state of Buddhism. "You'll get back together if you just stay in the here-and-now and hang on." This was why he worked hard to get agreement in the Monday Night Class.

> There are many levels of agreement here; we agree to come and to move up close; we agree to good vibes; we agree to make me into 'no-mind' that speaks truth here. First, I want to say things to strengthen our common agreement, then do questions, because that's the way I get involved in what I'm doing.

Patrick, a regular young challenger, and Stephen had an exchange on "dharma". Stephen said you don't need to concern yourself about it, if you just stay in the here-and-now. Dharma, a Hindu religious idea of duty, is anything that works right. Accord-

ing to Stephen, good karma is dharma. He told Patrick that he should do some good dope and get off all his energy rip-off games in the class meetings.

Then one of the persons who turned out to be a continuing challenger this evening asked Stephen if "selective violence" wasn't necessary sometimes. Stephen replied no, that most of the country was alright. "A portion is not very sane, but if you scare a nut he's even harder to relate to, and we've got to be able to relate to them." He continued by saying that just as this class is "a head" and "a family is a head", so too a "society is a head." We are all inside that "head." "I don't want anybody to be nutty, or afraid, because it will mess us all up."

There followed a discussion of "ego" which develops from being overly self-conscious. We all have a "viewpoint" but shouldn't be so self-conscious. "Don't worry too much about self-preservation or you won't do the truth."

Three men interrupted and challenged Stephen. They criticized the way he did all the talking in the class. When he tried to respond, they kept interrupting him, so he stopped. Then Stephen folded his hands in the palms together position of prayer, bowed his head, and paused as they fell silent. He turned his attention away from them and sought another questioner on the opposite side of the room.

He discussed paranoia, animals and children as "no-minds", and reincarnation. The challengers, however, returned to their agenda. One of them asked "Don't we have to get the business corporations?" Stephen responded that the country was seriously out

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of tune, but how do you tune it then?

> What it needs is more sanity. How do you create it? Not by hitting them. So all you can do is get sane yourself, and attract others to the same task. This is the only way this country, or any country, is okay, when the people get themselves together. So I work on helping people get sane.

The challengers disputed this and insisted that some violence was necessary. They attacked Stephen for the way he was running this meeting as not being democratic. Stephen met their challenge by speaking not to them but to the rest of the class.

> You see this game they're playing with me. I'm not the establishment, but these people are trying to rip-off energy with that game. So we should start calling that game when we see it. Any of you can. I ain't going through a confrontation, everybody should just react where they are.

There was general laughter, then Stephen turned to the challengers.

> Only part of this meeting is me talking, the other is all the energy we are moving around; its a miracle that we have juice to move around; we feel something else here besides clothes on our bodies and asses on the floor. We try to be loose enough to feel it.

A challenger on the floor and another in the balcony behind Stephen began a dialogue about this. Stephen broke in with the assertion that no single person has the right to invade the wholeness that we are making together. They pressed their concern about Stephen's leadership. Ina May spoke quietly to Stephen from her position sitting in front of him. Stephen then spoke to the class. "Ina May says she sees an anger <u>mudra</u> in all these three guys' gestures and talk. Their subconscious is using anger <u>mudra</u> to get the energy of the class' attention." Someone suggested that the guy in the balcony should leave if he doesn't like what Stephen is

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doing. But Stephen spoke quickly "No, we never invite anybody out." The challengers refused to stop talking, so Stephen sat back and said "Okay, you talk for awhile." A member of the class spoke at the first pause among the challengers. "Look Stephen is a teacher, we are his pupils, that's the way this meeting works." Another person, a girl sitting in a far corner, spoke up then. "Stephen helps us get it together each week. Look, these guys are just laying down shit. They are the reality we are trying to change." Another class member said, "We see that you see Stephen's comments as a negative feed back, but you take it personally. Everybody knows what is right all the time."

One of the issues the challengers raised was that if you want to change things you can't just sit around and do dope. Stephen now re-entered the conversation with about a five minute talk on dope as simply a valuable source of energy. He criticized them for trying to devalue dope, because it had gotten a lot of people high. Stephen recalled the time at Straight Theater, where he had taught in the spring of 1969, when he went without any drugs for two and a half months, not even using tea and coffee. The challengers replied that they liked what was happening there better, that it was a more free exchange of views. They felt the class now was a "white wash". Stephen responded that we are not here for excitement but to build something that is sane, then to export the sanest of this meeting throughout the country.

Following this comment he mentioned that he would probably miss three or four meetings this summer so that he could go do

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meetings in some other parts of the country. He had invitations to speak at other places; right then he was planning on a visit to Boulder, Colorado for a festival that summer.

Another person suggested that it would be good to use Michael's painting of a mandala for class meditation. Stephen said that might be a "turn up the stimuli" trip. There was a sharp exchange about this by the challengers, then their energy dissipated. Stephen did a few more questions. He warned of subconscious and its "energy foraging games." Then the meeting was brought to an end with the chanting of the "Om". Stephen said his usual "goodnight and God bless you."

In this meeting, Stephen's authority and manner of holding a meeting were directly challenged by three young political revolutionaries. The recent deaths of four young persons at Kent State University had shaken the confidence of many young people in the student generation in May 1970. The issue of the use or the need for revolutionary violence was being discussed on many campuses across the country. Here Stephen and his students met this challenge to their basic quest for agreement as their way of working on change. Stephen allowed these challengers to dissipate their own efforts through their harsh emotional tone and their conflicted manner. His own answers were calm and reasonable. His students understood and rose to his defense. Together they outlasted the challengers. It was their meeting, their teacher, and their way. They could sustain the meeting in the face of such challenges. Stephen was the road chief of their ritual. He provided the focus for their shared creation of a religious vision based in the psychedelic experience,

and he conducted the meeting in such a way that their common feelings confirmed the vision they were creating.

The Sacred Cosmos

As a teacher, Stephen drew upon all the secular sources of his own background and the religious materials that had emerged in the lingua franca of the drug-using counter-culture of the 1960s. In answering his students' questions he created a coherent but eclectic vision about the way the universe worked and the human way of living within it. There is no question that the older religious resources shaped this vision and their behavior, but finally, these materials have been transformed by the psychedelic experience they shared, the give-and-take of the questions arising out of their concrete lives in the USA, and the growing poetic skill with which Stephen responded. In this social interaction of students and their teacher, the transformation was completed as they, together, produced an "originating" vision of a sacred cosmos.

Buddhism was the religious tradition to which Stephen seemed most naturally drawn. He was attracted to the poetic and mystical traditions of Zen Buddhism. Zen represented for him the blend of the practical and the mythical which suited his own aesthetic, ascetic, and religious needs. Frequently he referred with great respect to the Zen Master who headed up the San Francisco Zen Center, Suzuki Roshi. Stephen believed that he was the cleanest, straightest, human being he had seen. On a few occasions he told about how he had gone to visit him in his early struggle to find his own

vision, but these encounters seemed to have been ambiguous for both of them.

Stephen used many elements from Buddhism and from the broader Eastern religious background of Hinduism. The psychological insights of Buddhism were important for Stephen's own teachings. In contrast to Western psychology Stephen thought that Buddhism recognized the sixth sense in addition to the five senses of taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing. The sixth sense was the integrating sense of thought. This emphasis upon mental power fit nicely with the heightened mental sensibilities of the psychedelic experience. Stephen often talked of the Zen Buddhist concept of "no-mind". This was the perfect state of mental emptiness in which all six of the senses were oriented, openly and completely to the ongoing environment. For Stephen this was the perfect state of being.

Stephen was attracted to the concept of the Cosmic Mind from Hinduism; he preferred to call it, Spirit. He saw this as the essence of the universe. When one was in the no-mind state or high on an LSD trip, all peripheral matters were stripped away in this experience of oneness with the Cosmic Mind. In his view, you know then that you are the one who is running the universe and manifesting creation. Another frequently used concept in Stephen's teaching from a Hindu background was that of karma. This was the law of moral cause-and-effect upon which the universe operated. He taught that the idea of karma points to a present sense that everything you are doing in the here-and-now counts. Nothing is lost. All is spiritually or morally significant and meaningful if you are living and acting in the "here-and-now". If you are not paying attention

in the here-and-now, then you will take actions and have thoughts that will produce negative karma. On the other hand, if you are paying close attention, existing in a "no-mind" state, then it is possible for you to build positive karma. This is positive moral determinism shaped from a present tense life-style.

Other Buddhist concepts to which Stephen referred in his teachings included the vow of the bodhisattva, the similarity of nirvana and samsara, and the two major schools of Buddhist thought, the Mahayana and Hinayana. The vow of the bodhisattva was important in Stephen's teaching because in it those who are on the spiritual path of Enlightenment are reminded to be compassionate and to be concerned about all the other living creatures in the universe. This provided him with a rationale for his own work as a religious teacher helping others along the path. He believed that the Buddha was right when he explained the shift between samsara, the world of suffering, to nirvana, the world of Englightenment, as being a shift in the way you related yourself to the Cosmos in the here-and-now, and not a journey to some other mythical place.

Stephen preferred the Mahayana school, which he called "big boat" Buddhism, over the southern monastic school of Hinayana or "small boat" Buddhism. Stephen taught that until all of us get it together none of us can get as high by ourselves as all of us can get high together. This was why he preferred the Mahayana tradition. Another reason he preferred the Mahayana tradition was its acceptance of the spiritual significance of sexuality. Zen masters were quite often married and had families. Stephen called this, "doing householder yoga". Further, Stephen was attracted to the Tibetan

Buddhist tradition called Tantra which had utilized a form of sexual activity for achieving higher levels of spiritual integration. He and his expanded family saw themselves as a tantric marriage seeking to integrate all aspects of their lives, including sexuality, in order to intensify and to sustain themselves at higher levels of spiritual integration.

Buddhism flavored his sense of mission to other people more than Christianity. Stephen was not evangelical, seeking to get other people to join his movement or affirm some specific pattern of beliefs; rather in the Eastern religious manner he saw himself as a model for the spiritual pilgrimage. It was this model, his way of proceeding and his spiritual insight into their pilgrimage which Stephen offered to his students. He stressed the unity of all religious traditions. There were many paths, including the psychedelic experience, on which a person might make spiritual progress toward the goal of achieving oneness and harmony with the universe. Stephen did utilize some of the materials of Christianity, particularly the New Testament stories about Jesus and his teachings. Stephen insisted that it was not until he realized the profound spirituality of Buddhism, however, that he was able to really perceive the spiritual significance of Christianity. He said that by the time Christianity got to us it had run down; it had no spiritual "juice" in it any more. Nevertheless, he taught that Jesus was about many of the same things as Buddha, Krishna, and other spiritual teachers or Avatars. Jesus was the best historical example of a person in touch with the phenomenon of Christ-consciousness, the

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universal compassionate love that exists in the universe. Stephen, on occasion, contrasted what he saw as the Old Testament's gift of the law in the work of Moses with what he saw as Jesus' work in the New Testament as the gift of free grace. Many times Stephen referred to Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount as good "navigational rules" for understanding and having a psychedelic drug experience. He differed with classical Christian theology in his interpretation of Jesus' teaching about God the father. Stephen believed that the church had made Jesus' teaching about the oneness of God into an exclusion of other possible spiritual paths to that oneness. On some public occasions I saw Stephen questioned sharply by conservative Christians and he often agreed with them in approaching the biblical materials as literally true, especially the miracles of healing or transubstantive changes of the natural order. He disagreed with them in their attempt to see Jesus as the only way for a person to find the path to spiritual enlightenment. Instead he held Jesus to be one of the great exemplars, but he challenged his students to find their own way to become their own Christ. Most Christian theologians would probably consider Stephen's interpretation of Christianity as falling within that broad category known as gnosticism. Certainly Stephen did not find the central and classical doctrines of incarnation, redemption, atonement meaningful in terms of his understanding of Jesus' life ministry and purpose. This is clear in his interpretation of Jesus as a marvelous wonder-worker even able to go so far as to allow himself to be killed and then to restore himself to life. The resurrection had no theological significance or cosmic significance in terms of other people. In his view there was no once-for-

all salvation achieved by Jesus' activity on behalf of the rest of humankind. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to Stephen to leave an impression that he was not greatly impressed by Jesus' life as revealed in the New Testament. He followed very closely what he saw as a literal interpretation of those scriptural materials.

Not all of the source materials in the sacred cosmos which Stephen taught, came from religious sources. His background as an English teacher at San Francisco State exposed him to the thought of Professor, and later President, S. I. Hayakawa.[1] Professor Hayakawa was well known for his advocacy of the General Semantics approach to linguistic analysis. Stephen's analysis of the transactions of interpersonal communication and their impact on one's understanding of the world, clearly derived from this exposure. The only criticism that Stephen had of this approach in his later religious teachings was it did not encourage belief in God. Therefore, he referred to himself as "trans-semantic" to differentiate himself from a general semanticist. He wished to disassociate himself from the reductive and positivistic tendencies inherent in this school of thinking about language and human behavior. Stephen, because of his psychedelic experience and the impact of the religious traditions upon his thinking, had moved to a multi-dimensional understanding of the world. Yet the influence of General Semantics lingered on in his intense concentration upon the analysis of human communication. From this analysis of human communication he drew many important ideas about the way human beings live and interact in this Cosmos.

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[1]Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action.

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Other secular sources included the global theorists who had become popular within the 1960s. Marshall McLuhan's work which focused on an understanding of human communication, and Buckminster Fuller's work which attempted to design global systems for better human interaction, were both influential in Stephen's teaching.[1] Stephen clearly was a global theorist himself. He sought to construct a cosmic myth that would incorporate both the material and the spiritual levels of existence in one comprehensive theory. He shared with McLuhan a sensitivity to what communication media, especially television, were doing to contemporary American culture. In contrast to these two secular theorists, Stephen tended to question the adequacy of a primarily scientific or humanistic approach for understanding human civilization. He would refer to some of their ideas, but more often than not, he would utilize them in a much larger scheme which he had about the spiritual import of understanding these various cultural or technological processes. With McLuhan he recognized that we were entering into a new age of tribalism. He, however, did not share McLuhan's positive assessment of television. With Fuller he shared a desire to understand how the universe works, i.e. the basic principles of the design of the universe. In contrast to Fuller, his field theory relied much more on the creative power of the human inner self as revealed in his psychedelic experi-

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[1] R. Buckminster Fuller and Robert Marks, The Dymaxion World of Buckminster Fuller (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1973); Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

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ences. This led him to adopt religious and spiritual images for how the Cosmos functioned, rather than the mathematical and technological analogies that Dr. Fuller preferred.

Throughout it all Stephen and his students were making a translation of these source materials, always grounding their elaborations in their common psychedelic experience. As Stephen said, "In our drug experiences we were checking out the scriptures together."[1] This was what had excited them about drugs. Drugs provided them with the experiential means for testing the spiritual realities in which the Spirit was manifesting its Cosmic Being. In the Monday Night Class meetings, Stephen and his students worked long and hard in continually creating and elaborating the basic realities revealed to them in their psychedelic experiences. The result was a myth, an ultimate belief system. Some of the elements in this belief system are:

(1) "Acid is reality."[2]

Psychedelic experience is not an emotional escape from existence; instead, it strips away your non-essential egotistical self-image and your underground cultural conceptions, and plunges you into the midst of the fundamental reality of the universe, Spirit itself.

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[1]Family Interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

[2]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, April 6, 1970.

> We've already been given a flat miracle . . . that psychedelics came down the way they did in this culture and put all that power into spirit in such a way it couldn't be mistaken is a miracle. We don't need another miracle. Like the miracle is that spirit is . . . that there really is such a thing as God. The miracle is in the reality.[1]

(2) "Truth is absolute."[2]

American culture teaches everything is relative. Parents have been too permissive in raising children; the school teachers taught you how to lie effectively; a college education is a major block to Enlightenment because of its ungrounded conceptualizations.

> The thing about truth is . . . God is I think trying to communicate with himself. . . . And he has, on this here planet, about three and a half billion transceivers walking around, babbling to each other, constantly, trying to carry the circuit load for that incredible conversation that's going on, of God talking to himself. . . . Truth is accurate information about the here and now in the here and now. . . . I think that truth is the same as God, I think that love is also the same as God.[3]

> Learn what is the way that your head reacts in every situation. Being raised in this culture, with the presuppositions of this culture about the nature of the mind, means that you were programmed in your youth with erroneous information about nine chances out of ten. Clearing the subconscious is nothing other than the complete re-programming of your own head, and you have to take the job in your own hands and do it yourself. The best thing you can depend on is somebody who will tell you the truth. If you find someone who'll tell you the truth about where you're at, hang on to 'em, don't let 'em get away. And practice telling the truth, because

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the eighth lecture. There are no titles or page numbers in this book.

[2]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 11, 1970.

[3]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the first lecture.

> we haven't been taught a very high value on truth in this culture. We have to place value on truth. We have to be scrupulous in truth down to the finest detail. Letting something not quite true slip past hangs you up for awhile. . . until you get straight with it, in fact.[1]

(3) "Mind over Matter."[2]

American culture distracts you from the spiritual reality of life through competitive violence, meaningless social games, and the continual "turn up the stimuli" strategies of unbridled materialistic consumerism. The truth is the opposite; Spirit runs matter. We can individually overcome the entropy of matter by simplifying the material level of our lives. Live by the "monkey rules."

> Some people don't have the material plane worked out. We're all hip to that. When you start maneuvering the material plane around from the material plane it does not come out even, because those who are strongest on the material plane will take the most of it. So the only way to bring about anything on the material plane, like any kind of fairness, is to go for broke for the spiritual plane as hard as you can in order to educate people out of the idea of having more than they need.[3]

(4) "Straighten up; you can change."[4]

Psychedelic experience revealed the dilemma and the power

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the eighth lecture.

[2]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 11, 1970.

[3]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the third lecture.

[4]Golden Gate Park meeting, San Francisco, May 27, 1970.

of the human self. The overly self-conscious person has developed "ego", and his subconscious is an "energy thief." Acid temporarily cleans out the subconscious and rips off the ego, then you can put yourself back together correctly by simply paying close attention to the here-and-now, and seeking telepathic agreements with fellow humans.

> He says to remember that it's not really the death of your ego but the death of your ego's defenses. . . . Your ego is just your viewpoint . . . it's cool, it's just your camera. But when it starts looking at itself and getting rear-view mirrors and defense mechanisms and stuff, then it's time to dip it in the sheep-dip again. That's what acid is, it's just spiritual sheep-dip.[1]

> The important thing is the structure of the mind and how we as individuals relate to our creator. When we understand our relationship to God, and then understand that all we're here for is to get straight . . . we ain't got anything else to do, all we're here for is to get straight. And if we get straight we will groove. We get straight so we can groove. The important thing then to learn is structure . . . the structure of your own mind, how does your own mind work.[2]

(5) "Every community needs a teacher."[3]

Stephen is the "road chief" for creating the "group-mind" in the class meetings. He served their communion. Also he exemplifies the path in his own life and instructs his students in the ways to integrate their behavior at higher spiritual levels.

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the sixth lecture.

[2]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the eighth lecture.

[3]Sunday Service meeting, San Francisco, June 28, 1970.

> Jesus used to say that he could cast a demon out of your head, but that if you didn't shut the doors and windows yourself, then seven demons worse than that one would come back in to take over the empty head. This is an idea about an enlightenment, and about the power of an enlightened teacher. Some people come to me and say, Okay, if you're enlightened, zap me straight. You know, say Zap, you're straight. As I read the book and as I understand it for myself, Jesus couldn't do that, Buddha couldn't do that--there's something in the contract about free will, I can tell you paths that will take you to enlightenment, but you have to work yourself. . . you have to walk 'em yourself. I can't walk 'em for you. You got to do it. You got to make the effort.[1]

(6) "Trust your automatic pilot."[2]

This universe is okay. Each of us is a part of the God who is manifesting this creation. Relax, you are a perfect whatever you are. Use your personal attention to manifest what we all agree is perfect and good.

> I have to say that I believe that this is the best of all possible worlds, because here we are . . . just for openers . . . here we are, we ain't somewhere else, we're here. And this is the best of all possible worlds cause it's the one that we all agree on. You see . . . . And so there are some funny places in the agreement structure . . . we say, Hey, man, how come we agree to some of us getting like such a rough show sometimes? Why do we agree to that? Because it's the level of agreement that we have. We do the best we can with the level of agreement that we have. Now at the top level we all have perfect agreement--it's perfect by definition from in front. And then as we get farther away, there gets to be a little less agreement . . . right now we have a pretty strong level of agreement.[3]

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the eighth lecture.

[2]Monday Night Class, San Francisco, April 6, 1970.

[3]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the sixth lecture.

In November of 1969, Stephen published his own list of aphorisms which succinctly summarizes many of the recurring themes in his teachings:

> Much of the psychic technology we use is in the form of aphorisms learned "on the hoof" while on LSD. These are usually terse, like the following, as sometimes there is not much time for cerebration.
>
> We are all one.
> Truth before "high."
> You can't go anywhere that you can't get back from.
> Attention is energy.
> It's not that you can't lose it, but that you can always get it back.
> One man, one karma.
> Everyone creates everything that happens to him.
> It's not that you get high and come down, but that you get high and reintegrate at that level.
> "It's all in the mind, you know." --Beatles
> You can't come down from what you know.
> "As above, so below." --Hermes the Thrice-Majestic
> God is love.
> "If you would till the square foot field, till the square inch field." --I Ching
> "It's getting better all the time" --Beatles
> "If the unsulliable nature of the intellect be realized, no longer is it necessary to seek absolution of one's sins." --The Precepts of the Gurus, Tibetan Yoga
> Everybody really knows where it's at-- all the time.
>
> Although the foregoing aphorisms may seem austere, when it comes to the actual practice, the prime instruction is stay loose, groovy, high, happy and compassionate, to manifest the kingdom here and now, with or without the assistance of drugs.[1]

Conclusion

My report in this chapter of this community's drug experiences, religious vision of the universe, and the basic social forms of their

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[1] Stephen, The Group Head, 13.

living, shows that Stephen and the Monday Night Class are a case of sustained religious drug usage among young Americans today. They clearly meet each of the three criteria established in Chapter One for validating such a case:

(1) they described their significant psychedelic drug experiences, using religious categories, as an awesome encounter with the fundamental reality of the universe;

(2) in their common meetings, they gathered and shared their experiences with drugs and with life; through Stephen's teaching they drew upon religious and secular sources to create and to elaborate a mythological interpretation of human existence, an ultimate belief system;

(3) on the basis of their holy encounter using drugs and in response to their understanding of the Sacred Cosmos, they made substantial changes in their personal lives, e.g. group marriage, regular class meetings, Sunrise Sunday Service, and simplified living patterns.

Their development as a group into the large regular Monday Night Class meeting, where they spent three or four hours in dialogue about everything from the cosmic to the mundane, represents the completion of an early phase in their social development. They moved from a group of individuals with religious psychedelic experiences, i.e. the encounter moment, to a community involved in the symbolic elaboration of a religious model for the Cosmos and a religious model for living, still grounded in the psychedelic experience, i.e. the myth moment.

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I did not observe this early development in my field research, for it began three years before my arrival. In the spring of 1970 I saw the fruits of their labors. In Chapter Three, I present my observations, descriptions, and interpretation of the full flowering of the ethos moment. It was in this ethos phase that I had predicted a shift in the experiential root of authority for their collective myth from the psychedelic experience to the social experiences of their communal life.

CHAPTER III

STEPHEN, THE HOLY MAN

In this chapter, first, I bring the story of the Monday Night Class to the present, concentrating my account on 1970-1971. Second, I present my observations, description, and interpretation of the social processes which shaped them as a religious community. This permits me to answer the second question guiding this research into religious drug usage among young Americans: is there an observable decline in their drug usage as they socially develop a religious understanding of their lives and of their drug experience? In so doing, I document their development as a religious community from the myth moment, i.e. the symbolic elaboration of an ultimate belief system, to the ethos moment, i.e. the reconstruction of everyday behavior in order to achieve wholesome social relatedness. This development reaches its natural completion in the public emergence of Stephen as a "Holy Man."

The Psychedelic Path Beyond LSD

From the spring of 1970 to the spring of 1971, Stephen and the Monday Night Class entered into a year of transition. It was to be a year of travel, first for Stephen, and later, for two hundred and fifty core members of the Monday Night Class. As a result of his participation in a conference on drugs and the young

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held at the Glide Church's Urban Center in February 1970, Stephen received several invitations to speak at churches, campus ministry centers, and colleges across the USA.[1] The first of these was in Kansas City in June 1970, and Stephen, pleased with the response that he got and the seriousness and success of his mission with these new people, began to plan a cross-country tour of speaking engagements that summer.[2]

Before these plans came to fruition, two other events occurred. In June, the Family Dog hosted the second "Holy Man Jam," The One Festival, with Stephen playing a major role in this all-day Sunday event.[3] Later that summer a much larger festival of "holy men" and others was held in Boulder, Colorado, The Boulder Whole Earth Fair.[4] Stephen was one of the major resource persons invited to teach at this week-long event. Several bus loads of class members accompanied Stephen and his family to Boulder.

At this "festival of Holy Men" Stephen was the only teacher publicly identified with the psychedelic experience. The other teachers represented Eastern religious traditions or esoteric spiritual practices. Several times during this week the traditional teachers and their students challenged Stephen on his drug usage. Since Stephen had come into his role as a spiritual teacher from

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[1] Drugs and the Young Conference, at Glide Memorial Methodist Church's Urban Center, San Francisco, February 2-6, 1970.

[2] Sunday Service meeting, San Francisco, June 28, 1970.

[3] One Festival, at the Family Dog Ballroom, San Francisco, June 7, 1970.

[4] Boulder Whole Earth Fair, Boulder, Colorado, July 20-26, 1970.

his personal drug experiences, and since his class was socially situated within the San Francisco drug subculture, the debate with Yogi Bhajan, Swami Satchidananda, and others in Boulder, struck at the root of Stephen's authority to teach a spiritual path. By the end of the week, Stephen had resolved in his mind and had successfully defended in public the psychedelic path. He concluded, "Dope is a path."[1] Significantly, he had done this in a manner which maintained his authority without appearing to de-value the work of the more traditional teachers. Instead, he achieved their public respect and their silent acquiescence, if not agreement. Moreover, he taught that his way involved more than just using psychedelic drugs. In that teaching he began to shift the emphasis from his expertise in psychedelic experience to himself as exemplar of a new spiritual way of life in America. This week in Boulder with its public challenges, dramatized and strengthened Stephen's emergence as a "Holy Man." He was one among other holy men, with his own distinctive way to teach the "tradition" of the path toward Englightenment.

In October 1970, Stephen and nearly two-hundred and fifty of his followers in over fifty converted trucks and buses left San Francisco in a caravan to tour the USA.[2] For the next five months, this version of the Monday Night Class traveled from one speaking engagement to the next, meeting people, developing rapport with "middle-America", policemen et.al., and spreading Stephen's message.

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[1]University Christian Church, Boulder, Colorado, July 26, 1970.

[2]Stephen, The Caravan. There are no page numbers in this book.

They visited and held public meetings in: Mount Angel, Oregon; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Iowa City, Iowa; Evanston, Illinois; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; Plainfield, Vermont; Providence, Rhode Island; Stony Brook, New York; Princeton, New Jersey; Haverford, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Washington, D. C.; Atlanta, Georgia; Nashville, Tennessee; Columbia, and Kansas City, Missouri; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, I arranged for their visit to the University of Michigan.[1] They visited for six days in November, 1970. The Caravan parked and lived in a nearby state park. Stephen held meetings in a large dormitory, a lecture hall, and a campus religious center for three evenings. Several members of the Caravan did odd jobs in town to earn money for their living expenses, since Stephen had forbidden living off "welfare." In the meetings the main debates in Ann Arbor involved the political versus the spiritual revolutions, how to treat the cops, and homosexuality. Stephen frequently told the story of the Monday Night Class. He emphasized in his teaching why he no longer used LSD but organic drugs, and what a good time they were having meeting all kinds of people in their travels. Stephen, as usual, answered all questions with his religious teachings about "how the universe worked," and how their present forms of living had just "fallen on them." He said they were traveling so that they might learn about the spiritual condition of the United States, and also to spread the sanity of

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[1]Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 9-14, 1970. This account is documented in my field notes and audio-tapes of their public meetings.

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their communal "group-head" to others. Stephen was critical of the University for teaching "relativity of truth", of Ann Arbor's beatniks for their tendency towards conflict in the meetings, and, finally on Saturday morning, of me. He believed that I had gotten too busy and too materialistic in my life-style. Further, I had been around him long enough to know that what he was doing was true. Therefore, I should sell my possessions, get a bus, and join the Caravan. When I refused, he vowed no further cooperation with my study of his group. He advised me to give up writing about them for my own spiritual health. We parted disagreeing.

The traveling Monday Night Class returned to San Francisco in February 1971.[1] They had now become the Caravan. Later they published a collection of Stephen's lectures made on this tour and called it The Caravan. It documents their experiences and their continuing transformation as a new religious movement. Too much had happened to them to return to the former dispersed life of the original weekly Monday Night Class. So they acted upon another of Stephen's visions. Several times during the year, he wondered if they could find a piece of land to "get into the earth." On February 10, 1971 at the Sunday Service in Sutro Park, he made his decision to call the Caravan to return to a place in Tennessee that they had all liked in order to find such a piece of land. That spring they finally settled sixty-five miles south

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[1]Stephen, The Caravan.

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of Nashville, near a small farming community called Summertown.[1] There on approximately a thousand acres of land, they established a farming commune that was to grow in the next year to nearly five hundred members. As was their custom, they called their new home simply The Farm.

So much travel and so many changes had an impact on the basic patterns of their drug usage. Stephen's spiritual authority with the hip community clearly was rooted in his ability to interpret the psychedelic experience. Several of the Eastern spiritual teachers at the One Festival, and later even more extensively at the Boulder Whole Earth Fair, had challenged the spiritual value of the psychedelic experience. During this same period of time, the Charles Manson murder trial in Los Angeles raised the specter of violence in relationship to psychedelic drugs and their communal users.[2] Also Timothy Leary broke out of a California state prison, went into exile, and was preaching limited revolutionary violence.[3] After being again and again confronted with these matters, Stephen still supported organic psychedelic substances as an energy source for the spiritual quest. He stressed that drugs were a path for many young Americans because of the overly materialistic state of general United States culture.

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[1]"The Farm Report," The Daily Herald (Columbia, Tennessee), December 9, 1971, 1-B.

[2]"Charles Manson," The Rolling Stone, June 25, 1970, 24-48.

[3]"Tim Leary and the Long Arm of the Law," The Rolling Stone, March 15, 1973, 1, 20, 22.

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As Stephen moved from community to community across the USA on the Caravan, he had to deal with questions about drugs from those on a spiritual quest, those who thought drugs were a political "cop-out," and those representatives of "middle-America" who believed drugs were socially and ethically destructive. Early in its tour, the Caravan was stopped and searched in a small community in Oregon, and Stephen and a few others were officially arrested for possession of marihuana and peyote.[1] After some bargaining which convinced the local prosecutor that Stephen was a serious and sane person, it was arranged for them to continue their trip with the agreement to return in the spring of 1971 to stand trial on a reduced charge. Much later at the New York state line, Stephen lied about their possession of drugs; others on the Caravan, however, told the truth, and after some hassle they paid a fine and were allowed to continue their travels.[2] According to Stephen's own report, this was a time of great disorganization and low morale for the whole Caravan. Mostly, however, Stephen and his followers enjoyed their interactions with the middle-class peoples of America. He did not enjoy his continual need to explain that they were religiously serious but also used illegal drugs.

By December of 1970, Stephen had reached a new decision about their drug usage. At a Sunday service in Burlingame State Park, Rhode Island on November 29, 1970, Stephen announced what should be

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[1]Stephen interview, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 10, 1970.

[2]"Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont, November 22, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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the Caravan's new drug policy.

> I was talking yesterday about policy levels about psychedelics, and I've been thinking more about it, and I've got more information about it. I've had to cop to psychedelics because they taught me where my Higher Self was--that I had one. I can find it now with or without. We've come all the way across the country and we've made it this far and we've got a good look at what's going on. I've had a chance to get to talk to folks--like it was really good to get to talk with the camper fellow who came on in an article in the paper about, "We've been trying to keep the hippies out of Burlingame for years and here someone comes and invites them in for free. Where's that at?" I got to talk to that fellow and tell him where it was at about the way we use psychedelics for spiritual things, and we talked it over and I found myself agreeing with him on funny places. He said, "There's a bunch of thirteen-year-old kids out there. See them? Would you tell them to take LSD?" I said "No," He said, "Huh?" Said, "No." He said, "Why not?" I said, "It's too strong. Not wrong, just strong. Really strong." Well, I think LSD really did a thing, but I don't think it's got as much juice in it as it used to have. I've been gaining compassion with the cops in this journey across the country because I never talked with so many before. I begin to see that the majority of them are peace officers, that they don't want people to hurt other people, that if a whole bunch of people can be together and someone comes in drunk and starts busting them up, their job is to come get the fellow that's busting them up and let the other folks do their thing. That's really what most of them are about. And I got a look at us through their eyes from that. It was difficult to explain to them about why somebody would jump through a front window of Blum's, you know, that kind of thing. Some dude did that in San Francisco--Blum's is a candy shop, cake and pastries and stuff, and some dude on acid jumped through the front window of it. Now it's very hard to get somebody to say that that kind of behavior is not weird. They say, "Yeah, it looks weird to me, man, right through the front window." And I understand why they call acid a dangerous drug, because it looks scary to them. Well I really think that psychedelics are going to help get this country different. Psychedelics have already got this country different a lot. I think I can make folks understand about organics, and

> I'm willing to go ahead being a psychedelic-type teacher on the basis of doing it with organics. . . what grows in the woods, as the camper man said to me yesterday. But I ain't willing to do that for acid, because it's got too funny a name; too many weird people have done too many weird things on it. If I'm talking to anybody about acid I'd like to explain about how I saw the nature of the universe and my Higher Self and not have to explain other folks' weirdnesses. This is a policy place we're making because it's going to be a while before we have another chance to make a change like this. But I want to be able to say that we ain't taking acid, and have it be the truth.[1]

In this incident Stephen summarized many of the experiences that led him to prohibit the usage of acid among his followers on the Caravan.

Acid had been a breakthrough of truth for him and many of them, but now they must give it up for both practical and theoretical reasons. His teachings about the use of psychedelics had been undergoing this evolution for some time, but after this point the decision to see the LSD experience as a phase in their past pilgrimage becomes clearer with each re-statement. In an interview that he gave two women from Mademoiselle magazine only a few days later, he stated this understanding with even greater forcefulness and some theoretical elaboration.

> What acid came to teach us was that there's not just the material plane, that there's a spiritual plane and a higher plane, and a psychedelic changes its strength according to the belief of the folks that take it. And if the folks believe the psychedelic is strong, then it's strong. Wine used to be a psychedelic sacrament, coffee was a psychedelic sacrament, tobacco was a psychedelic sacrament. They lost the respect by getting too common and they

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[1]Sunday Morning Service, Burlingame State Park, Rhode Island, November 29, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

> don't have juice in them anymore. I'm off acid right now because I figure it's like worn out like an old shoe. It's just worn out. There are too many Charlie Mansons in it, too many Tim Learys in it--nuts to all that jazz. We can do another thing. But it will teach you vision, and you learn truth from vision. But, like dope is not a prerequisite to follow me, and it's not getting folks as high as it used to.[1]

Here Stephen placed the psychedelic experience into a larger historical evolution of various substances that have mediated a sacred experience to humans. As before, this substance also was losing its ability to enable people to encounter the Holy, because its widespread usage had led to disrespectful, even violent usage.

The teaching about psychedelics came to a full conclusion in January of 1971 in Columbia, Missouri. I had heard this kind of teaching from Stephen before. Especially, in his confrontation with some of the students of Eastern religious traditions, Stephen had talked of the need to learn a yoga in order to properly use psychedelic experience for spiritual purposes. It was this "yoga" that he was teaching his students. In this brief restatement during the Caravan, the idea solidified and became an article in the correct interpretation of psychedelic experience. He was answering a question about whether he felt there were other ways to achieve good karma without drugs.

> Sure. But I still think that peyote is good used in ceremony or in other places too. I think that grass really helps us a lot . . . that psychedelics can be used to help out the whole thing. But if

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[1]Mary Cantwell and Amy Gross, "A Talk with Stephen Gaskin," in Mademoiselle, March, 1971, 142-149, 207-212, 223.

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> you're going to go for broke for enlightenment you better love the truth. Because if I hadn't loved truth, acid wouldn't have got me high.[1]

At other times and places, Stephen had insisted that a lot of people were just using acid for their weekly energy hit. This was clearly not spiritually efficacious. Truth had to be loved, desired; you had to have the correct intention in your quest or LSD could not get you high by itself. Thus, the LSD experience is still a valued way, but it is increasingly put in the past tense. Further, its efficacy now is subject to the person's intention and his respectful attitude, and subject also to the standard of truth, which stands outside of the experience itself. The psychedelic vision can lead one to truth, but it is truth that is the final goal, and also the final standard for judging the worth of a particular drug experience.

During their first year in Tennessee, The Farm raised a crop of marihuana.[2] This was discovered by the local police, and Stephen and three others were arrested and charged with the growth of illegal substances. This led to a trial where Stephen admitted their usage of marihuana but defended it on religious grounds. The Farm appealed their case and they lost in the highest court in Tennessee. They are now in the process of appealing their right

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[1]"University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, January 12, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

[2]"Spiritualists Get Drug Sentences," Kansas City Star, November 14, 1971, section AA, 9.

for the religious usage of these substances to the U.S. Supreme Court.[1] There is no indication that Stephen has removed the prohibition against the use of LSD, but he obviously has chosen to stand and to fight for their right to use organic drugs as a part of their religious practice. In their view, the analogous case is the courts' granting of the right to use peyote in the religious ceremonies of the Native American Church. This is a practice that was defended successfully on several occasions by the Native American Indians in the southern and southwestern regions of the United States.[2] Stephen's appeal for his community's practice has no successful precedent among non-Native Americans.

During the time I was with Stephen and his family, they made extensive usage of marihuana. They smoked some throughout the day whenever a break in their activities allowed. Peyote was usually drunk in small group settings, but on some evenings the family also shared peyote tea. From my perspective, their usage of these two drug substances was a social drug usage, much like coffee or tea. Since marihuana might be smoked at anytime during the day, it was more like coffee usage in middle-class groups than like drinking alcohol. They viewed it as a source of spiritual energy for staying "high." Often Stephen defended their usage for the assistance it gave them in avoiding the growth of "ego." In any case, these organic drug substances, marihuana and peyote, were an everyday part

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[1] "Spiritual Commune Fighting Court Battle to Use Pot," Ann Arbor News, January 20, 1974, 25.

[2] J. S. Slotkin, The Peyote Religion (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956).

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of their lives. If acid was for visionary breakthroughs of the Spirit, these organic substances were for steady spiritual sustenance. They provided them with a greater psychological acuity and intensification for their continuing business of "getting straight with the universe" and "staying high on Truth." In terms of the basic pattern of drug usage that they had slowly evolved over their four years together in the Monday Night Class, it was these organic substances that had become central to their continuing, patient, and imaginative construction of their religious vision and community. It should not be surprising that it is on these substances that Stephen has chosen to take his stand, after moving beyond LSD in his own spiritual pilgrimage.

This then was their psychedelic path. For Stephen it began and ended in marihuana experience. It was LSD, however, that made him a visionary, provided him with the energy and insights that led him to found the Monday Night Class. For awhile, both he and his students did not break away from the general patterns of social drug usage in the USA, but as their experience with acid grew more important, they broke away from this general pattern of drug usage, much as they did from other living patterns of middle-class Americans. Instead, they sought to simplify and to intensify their interior experiences by their usage of the psychedelic drugs exclusively. As Stephen expanded his public teaching and his sense of mission to others than just the Monday Night Class, he was led away from using acid himself, and then, finally, he forbade the use of LSD among those who wished to follow him. Organic drugs, not synthetic substances, became the staple of their pattern of usage.

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There was an internal dynamic in this development of the psychedelic path, too. For Stephen LSD was an intense visionary experience that opened his eyes to the spiritual universe, but also he frequently needed to withdraw from this intense experience to tend to the purification of his living and thinking. There appears a natural rhythm of intensification and simplification throughout his story. The period of intensification through the usage of LSD was a time for the enrichment of the religious imagination. After over two hundred trips, Stephen felt that he had reached a point of diminishing returns in his spiritual quest. He had a rich enough vision of the universe; now the question became whether he could actualize this vision in his life and help others do the same. His periods of withdrawal from psychedelic usage were times when he simplified his own living situation and made its social forms reflect more clearly and more dramatically his vision. In his later perception that he and his movement had moved beyond the LSD experience, he faced the challenging daily demands of socially creating his vision in the activities of the Caravan and later the Farm. Constructing a new religious movement asks more of a charismatic leader than just his capacity to see and to tell of his vision; finally, it asks for the creation of a people who realize in their living the sacredness they met in him.

Additional confirmation of Stephen's ability to effect such a transformation in his students came in November 1972.[1] Stephen

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[1]Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 2-3, 1972.

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and about forty of his students returned to Ann Arbor as part of a month-long tour by their new rock and roll band. The Farm Band played two evenings, with Stephen teaching as part of each performance. Stephen's central message had not changed, but the style and emphasis in his teaching was different after a year of living on the Farm in Tennessee. He was openly critical of organized religion in the United States for having lost touch with the Spirit. He called the universities "parasites," and "playpens" for students. He recommended that students leave school and go to work. He called on all beatniks to straighten up their personal lives, to become self-supporting, and to quit scaring people with talk of revolutionary violence. During the second evening he showed slide photographs of the Farm. He told many stories about learning to live in rural Tennessee. He spoke about drugs only when someone directly asked him a question concerning them. He still affirmed that organic drugs might be used, but said that he did not wish to encourage young Americans to use them because of their inexperience in living. He was very proud of his students' success in actualizing what he had taught them in their new lives on the Farm. "It is not enough to see how the universe works but you gotta spend the rest of your life putting what you know into practice--that's the price you pay, all you got."[1] He said that everything they did on the farm was a spiritual work, a school and a church together, under his leadership. The psychedelic path had led them home.

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[1]Peter LaFreniere, "Philosophy, Jams and Psychic Ecology," Michigan Daily (Ann Arbor, Michigan), November 10, 1972, 4.

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The Psychedelic Community

As their mythic vision of the universe emerged in the dialogue together about their psychedelic experience, so also did their desire to incarnate that vision in their everyday living. It is one thing to see the truth; it is another to do the truth. Therefore, early in the Monday Night Class meetings they began the discussion of behavioral changes. By this they sustained their continuing quest for an ethical reflection of their religious understanding. By seeking agreement they hoped to produce enough attention for their religious vision so that it would be realized in their everyday living. During the period of time that I observed them, there were three major social relationships within which they found the means for incarnating their religious ethos. Those three were: the Monday Night Class meeting and similar group meetings, the Family with its four-marriage and the other four marriages that began to emerge within the class, and the creation of a charismatic authority, the Holy Man. All three of these relationships overlapped with each other, but each provided a context within which certain social interactions produced distinctive results in their quest to incarnate their common vision.

The Monday Night Class

The single most important social means by which this community found a way of integrating their vision and their behavior was the regular Monday Night Class. By early 1970 a core group of approximately twenty persons had been meeting regularly once a week for almost three years to engage in dialogue with Stephen.

During 1970 my observations of the Monday Night Class meetings, the Sunday Services and the Caravan, led me to estimate that at least another one hundred persons had been meeting regularly with Stephen for over a year. It is to this group which I refer as the core group of Stephen's students. There they shared their drug experiences, the challenges of their personal lives, and the changes they were trying to effect in them. Throughout it all they were creating a vision of what was spiritually serious in living. They were learning how to agree about a fundamental interpretation of the Cosmos. It was in this practice that they were learning how to evolve forms of social interaction for the creation of a religious community. Therefore, the history of the Monday Night Class, its origin, and its development were recurring themes in these meetings.

Stephen often referred to the Monday Night Class as his parish.[1] He was like a parish priest who returned each week to check what he

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[1] "University of Michigan, Rackham Hall, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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was doing and saying with his parishioners, so that they could keep him responsible to their common sense of spiritual development. The teaching format was still evolving during the six months that I observed the Monday Night Class. In the earlier classes Stephen would begin the sessions quite often with a long speech on some topic that he thought should be the discussion agenda for that evening. After this opening statement then people could ask relevant questions. Stephen soon shortened his initial speech, and later he preferred to begin with just a list of potential topics and then immediately open the floor for questions and answers. This question and answer format became the fundamental social interaction and it shaped, not only their behavior, but also the content of the teachings and the sense of how they were becoming a community. As Stephen said, "there's a certain kind of path you go from like a scattered head to communion. That has a certain sort of questions and answers down in it and it almost gets to be that there's got to be this certain exchange of questions and answers on the way to that communion."[1]

Another continuing feature of the Monday Night Class that had ritualistic implications was the use of the Hindu chant "Om". Each evening began with this chant. Stephen blew a tone on a hollowed-out cow horn, often accompanied by members of his family who used cow horns or sea shells. This opening chant seemed to tune the community to each other's subjective sense of awareness in the class; for no matter from where they came, in the chanting of the opening Om, they all settled down to center their attention and their

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, March 16, 1970.

energies upon the business of the class. Sometimes during a meeting if there had been a particular disruption, Stephen would call for the chanting of the Om again. The Om brought the community back into a present sense of attention. Oming was used at the beginning of the second half of the class and also always used at the ending of a class as a way of bringing the community once more into attunement before dismissal. Stephen called it "the rock-bottom simple ritual."[1]

To protect the serious spirituality in which they were engaged, Stephen insisted that there be no admission charge wherever he was teaching. This was true for all the Monday Night Classes. On one occasion, the One Festival, he agreed to appear where there was to be an admission fee to help defray expenses. But first, Stephen discussed this admission charge the week before at a Monday Night Class, because he considered it such a "heavy" decision.[2] After discussion in the class, he agreed to teach at the festival because he believed in these Holy Man Jams, and because the money raised from admissions was for the expenses of Holy Men who were traveling to San Francisco. Stephen too, accepted money for travel and living expenses when he went to another community to teach.

Stephen paid considerable attention to the communication process itself in each Monday Night Class. Sometimes this became a self-conscious discussion of a particular exchange between Stephen

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, March 16, 1970.

[2]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, June 1, 1970.

and a questioner. He led the class in deciding together on what had really happened. This was especially true if there had been a sense of disagreement in the encounter. Agreement was seen as the fundamental source of human energy for spiritual change. Therefore, disagreement was a loss of energy to be overcome by a careful analysis of why it had happened. One source of Stephen's concern with the communication process was his study of General Semantics. Yet, their common psychedelic drug experience was an even more important source of this intense interest in understanding and in analyzing their mutual interactions. Stephen often would refer to some of their drug experiences as he tried to understand or to make rules for how they should communicate with each other. Stephen's sayings about the way you needed to pay close attention to staying in the here-and-now were drawn from his experience of having to pay close attention to the here-and-now during psychedelic experience. Recall how he said:

> "Much of the psychic technology we use is in the form of aphorisms learned 'on the hoof' while on LSD. These are usually terse, . . . , as sometimes there is not much time for cerebration."[1]

I was able to observe Stephen in several other group settings with his students in which the question and answer dialogue was a central feature. The other regular one was the early morning Sunday Service beginning at sunrise. This service had been started during the period in which the Monday Night Class did not meet in late 1969,

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[1]Stephen, "The Group Head," 13.

but had been continued as a regular feature during 1970. Because it was so early in the morning and involved a considerable amount of meditation, it was a meeting for his most serious students. One of his wives Ina May commented that this Sunday service was the time when "we let him be a Zen Master."[1] Her observation was correct. There was much less disagreement on Sunday morning and an intimate telling of each other's stories. After the silent meditation period, the service resembled the Monday Night Class meetings in its basic form with transactions around questions and answers. Following the Sunday Service, Stephen and the Family would stay for another hour or so just visiting with individuals. This was a time for counseling students on their personal and family problems.

One of the more interesting meetings that I attended was a small group meeting at a farming commune near Santa Rosa.[2] Stephen and his family had grown close to this particular group of his students; they were transcribing and helping him edit some of his teachings. This effort led to the publication of Stephen's first book, Monday Night Class. I was invited to visit with Stephen and the family at this farm commune on a Thursday afternoon in June 1970. During the afternoon I acquired some understanding of how these small group meetings worked. Throughout the afternoon they drank peyote tea and shared grass around the circle. The meeting was

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[1]Geoffrey Link, "The Rainbow Maker," San Francisco (July, 1970), 19.

[2]Book Farm group interview, Santa Rosa, California, June 18, 1970.

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an intimate communion for Stephen and his students. The focus was on attaining greater consensus and agreement about what was going on in the here-and-now. It struck me that this was their religious counter-part of what other people on the West Coast were popularizing as "encounter groups."[1] As in other meetings, the student-teacher relationship was central to this small group meeting. Stephen, using a Native American Indian term, called himself the "road chief" for these communal meetings. There was no ritual chanting of the Om. The question-and-answer format was central thoughout the meeting. For nearly five hours Stephen and this group of fifteen people intensively explored spiritual and personal matters, drawing upon the energy from the peyote tea and marihuana cigarettes.

Stephen also taught in settings in which a large number of outsiders were present. Usually, he emphasized the story of the Monday Night Class, and his interpretation of the psychedelic drug experience. In these settings as soon as he had recounted the story of the Monday Night Class Stephen still went to questions and answers. Later, his willingness and his sense of responsibility for teaching in these kinds of settings grew and led to the creation of the traveling Caravan during 1970-71. His usual audience amongst outsiders was either in a church context or in colleges and other gatherings of young Americans. The questions of outsiders pressed Stephen again and again to basic restatements of their religious

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[1]Kurt W. Back, Beyond Words: The Story of Sensitivity Training and the Encounter Movement (Baltimore, Maryland: Penquin Books, 1973).

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myth and of their living patterns. Whereas, the questioning that evolved internal to the Monday Night Class itself became a quest for subtler agreement among insiders.

The Holy Man Jams were other examples where Stephen taught outside of his own spiritual community. In these, he was in the presence of religious teachers in Eastern religious traditions or new spiritual movements. Stephen shared a sense of common tradition and orientation with them. For this reason, the questioning of Stephen's teachings in the Holy Man Jams was more critical for his own self understanding and for his students than challenges raised by other outsiders. Even in these settings, however, Stephen preferred a question and answer format, perhaps sensing his own skill in that dialogical interaction. Also he believed this was the most spiritual way of communicating. This reflected his understanding of the importance of telepathic communication for real spiritual dialogue, and his sense of personal skill at integrating a large number of people into a single "group-head."

From my observations and from the teachings that Stephen developed about these meetings, I conclude that the teaching process itself, specifically the dialogue of question and answer for reaching "agreement," and creating a "group-head," became the main means for constructing and maintaining their sense of religious reality. It was their special way, their path or even their yoga. Through it Stephen had learned how to communicate their most essential spiritual truth. Even more than communicating it, Stephen sought in the dialogue to affect the other person's spiritual state of being.

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To ask a question was to be swept up into this symbolic process. Once in Boulder, Colorado during the summer of 1970, Stephen's sense of the critical significance of this process came out plainly.[1] This was a week in which he was being challenged on all sides by those who did not believe that drugs could be a spiritual path. He asked a small group of his students when they were out of the public, "why aren't the San Francisco people asking any questions? That's the way it works." He went on to discuss with them how he had a short memory-train going all the time because he wished to stay totally in the here-and-now. Since these other persons, who are seeing him for the first time, don't know how to really get a meeting going, he expected help from his students who did know how to question him.

In my final encounter with Stephen on his bus in Ann Arbor, Stephen also challenged me.

> "You've been around me too long and too close not to cop to what I'm doing as the truth. Why don't you ever ask me questions?"[2]

Although at first I had tried to question him and other members of the Family outside their public meetings, they had never seemed responsive to my kind of questions about them. This led me to adopt an observer role in most of my interaction with them. Stephen was right also that I had never asked him any questions in his public or small group meetings. The only exception was the brief attempt I made

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[1] Boulder Whole Earth Fair, Boulder, Colorado, Friday, July 25, 1970.

[2] Ann Arbor, Michigan, Saturday, November 14, 1970.

at his request when I met with him and the Book Farm commune near Santa Rosa. Even then he finally took charge of that meeting because, as he said at the time,

> "If he tries to interview me then he has to be the road chief and he doesn't know how. It'll just hang him up. So we should just go on with our meeting."[1]

Intuitively I did not wish to be drawn into this symbolic process. Perhaps some of the reason had to do with my research objectives to document their lives with minimal disruption on my part, but also I realize that I found the process somewhat threatening to my own view of the world and my self definition. Stephen realized at the end that my refusal to ask questions was an implicit challenge to his authority and to what they were doing as a religious community.

The Family

If the teaching process itself had been the major public means for putting together the Monday Night Class, the Family became the private social interaction in which Stephen actualized a behavioral model for his students' emulation. The family's life together provided content for discussion in small meetings with students. The students used them as a standard for judging their own family life.

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[1]Book Farm group interview, Santa Rosa, California, June 18, 1970.

I saw no major disagreement among the members of the Family, although it was obvious from the stories they told of their life together that they did spend considerable time working through disagreements among themselves. The Family was learning how to agree about the behavioral basics of being a human being. They were sharing a religious vision together and then turning it into the practical matters of day-to-day life. A main direction gained from their psychedelic experiences was to simplify everyday existence so that it would not distract from the intense integrating process needed to achieve a spiritual "high." Their integration as a four-marriage was intimate in the fullest sense. They expressed physical closeness in touching, holding onto each other, rubbing each other's back, etc. Even in the teaching situation of the Monday Night Class where Stephen sat alone on a small raised stage in front of a thousand people, the physical proximity of the other three adults and their one child immediately in front of the stage was a symbol of their support for Stephen in his teaching. When things became disruptive in the class, other members of the Family would quietly call Stephen's attention to what they saw as the disrupting factor. Stephen frequently referred to them, either by noting particular advice given him or by telling a story about their intimate life together. Often he would credit one of them with an insight that increased his understanding of the world. Stephen saw them as teachers and counselors. Perhaps they were not as far along the path as he was, but he encouraged them to teach and to counsel other people. Other students in the Monday Night Class did turn to the other three adult members of the Family for advice about particular matters. In

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some of the small group meetings where Stephen taught, the other members of the Family would speak up with their comments in answer to questions.

It was not in their capacity as teachers, though, that the Family served their major purpose in strengthening Stephen and his religious community. Instead it was in their way of working with him to realize a spiritually illuminating form of living behavior. It was these consensual agreements about how they would live, where they would live, what they would eat, what their sexual pattern would be, what they felt marriage was, how one should raise children, what should be involved in the schooling of children, etc., by which the Family made its large contribution of social energy to the emergence of this community. When the four-marriage first came together in 1968 they lived in an apartment in Haight-Ashbury. Stephen told stories about this period in which they were learning what it meant to share sexually and to simplify their material existence.[1] Their decision to leave this apartment and to live in an old school bus was another example of material simplification.

Similar patterns of simplification were practiced in terms of the clothes they wore and the food they chose to eat. Stephen recalled that in the early days of the class at San Francisco State he dressed fairly "freaky."[2] He said he liked to wear a lot of bells and jingly things; he wore a lot of leather clothes or bright flashy

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the fifth lecture.

[2]Family interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

garments. During their time together as a group-marriage all the family made some very clear choices in each of these areas. In clothing they paid attention to what they believed was the spiritual meaning of the color worn. They chose simple garments and had standardized the garments worn from week-to-week. The women often wore long dresses. Sometimes they would wear pants. Stephen wore blue jeans, corduroy pants, a blue jean jacket, simple work shirts, or turtleneck sweaters of a light cotton or synthetic material. Michael dressed similarly to Stephen but preferred darker clothing available in any department store as work clothes. Except in the case of Stephen, the main impression given was that clothing became less of a visual costume but more a simple functional background for their bodies and faces. The women wore nc makeup, no jewelry, or other means of personal adornment. Stephen said that he wore certain spiritual necklaces or symbols, and had only recently decided that they were not appropriate for him as a teacher. During the summer of 1970 he wore purple corduroy pants, because a royal color befits a teacher, and a simple white turtleneck sweater.

In terms of their eating patterns again they moved in a straight-forward direction towards simplification. During early 1970 when Stephen was asked in a class about what they ate he approached the matter casually.[1] He stressed that they did not make any moral decisions about the food they were giving up. Instead they

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, March 16, 1970.

gave up things as they went along, as they discovered which ones seemed to be helpful and which ones seemed to hold them back on their spiritual journey. During the summer, and certainly by November in their visit to Ann Arbor on the Caravan, they developed a moral interpretation for vegetarianism. "I've been to animal killings and to rice boilings, the vibes are better at the rice boilings."[1] When Nancy and I shared a simple meal with them in June 1970 they were vegetarians, but they still ate dairy products. In July when they visited with the other Holy Men at the Boulder Whole Earth Fair, they had given up dairy products and ate only vegetable products. Also, as Stephen talked to the other Holy men, he said that he was a vegetarian because he did not wish to do violence to life. Further, the Family would not use any leather products for these could be made only by killing animals. They gave up leather shoes, wearing tennis shoes or rubber boots. They gave up belts and used simple sashes of cloth material to hold up their pants. Another factor in their eating patterns was their belief that you should not eat too much. They felt most Americans overate. If one wished to be on the spiritual path one must simplify and control very self-consciously one's eating habits. My observations led me to believe that they usually had only one meal a day late in the afternoon. This was sometimes altered to fit into Stephen's teaching responsibilities. My overall impression was that during the day they would have a piece of fruit, a cookie, or a

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[1]Rackham Hall meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970.

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vegetable rather than sit down together as a family to have a meal. The Family also considered marihuana and peyote as vegetable sources of energy of a high quality. Ina May, when asked about her drug usage by people who were questioning it, frequently responded "we like to see drugs as simply food for energy."[1]

The unique thing about the Family was its sexual experience as a group marriage. In their interpretation this was another form of spiritual energy. They frequently would cite their sexual behavior as a source of their insight into what it meant to be human. They had achieved a sexual sharing which included all four adults with each other.

There were some occasions upon which they were questioned about possible homosexual patterns of interaction. Usually, Stephen deflected these questions with the comment that "he did not make these distinctions anymore" or that the purpose of the Family was a spiritual one; they were not simply looking for "new and unusual ways to ball."[2] It is my belief that there was little, if any, overt homosexual activity in the four-marriage. Some of the other students who were just getting started in a four-marriage during the summer of 1970 were more open about their problems and sought counseling from Stephen and his Family. The problems that they usually raised were those involved with jealousy between heterosexual partners

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[1] Boulder Whole Earth Fair, Boulder, Colorado, Thursday, July 23, 1970.

[2] Alice Lloyd Dormitory meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 11, 1970.

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rather than problems generated out of homosexual desires or activity.

Stephen preferred to talk about their sexuality as a form of sexual yoga, called Tantra in Tibetan Buddhism. "To get telepathic on touch is called tantric yoga, and it's the yoga of making love, spiritually if you will, and it's just simply opening up all your things."[1] Sexual experience sought in the group marriage then was to serve their larger spiritual quest. Stephen mentioned turning to a sexual relationship with one of his wives as a way of slowing himself down and getting his energy back together. Some of his comments suggested that the male partner was seen as the more passive member in sexual intercourse, while the female became the active guiding member in their sexual experience.[2] Stephen criticized what he saw as "the John Wayne machismo" sexuality of America where the male partner is only interested in having his sexual climax as quickly as he could. Stephen said that he sometimes could reach a very spiritual place where there was no need for him to have a sexual orgasm. He talked of sexual intercourse as a way of circulating, re-circulating, and refining one's bodily energies from one person to another, until it was evened out and both were in agreement in a "high" spiritual way.

The Family, then, was the social relationship where the behavioral basics were worked out in a daily way. Greater consensus

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[1] "Princeton University Chapel, Princeton University, New Jersey, December 12, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan. See also, Stephen, Monday Night Class, the sixth lecture.

[2] "Goddard College, Plainsfield, Vermont, November 22, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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was sought as each behavioral change was made in pursuit of their spiritual quest. For example, it was where they faced the task of rearing children. During 1970 when I was observing them in San Francisco there was only one child living with Stephen and his Family; that was Sidney. Sidney was about four years old and was the biological child of the other couple in the four-marriage, Michael and Ina May. Stephen's daughter by a former marriage, eight year old Dana, joined the Family on the Caravan.

The problems of being a parent in a spiritually beneficial way were topics of heated discussion in the Monday Night Class.[1] Furthermore, the behavior that children exhibited in this large gathering became subject to scrutiny and to correction as the class was occurring. In general, Stephen felt that the beatniks were overly permissive with their children, even indulgent in ways beyond their parents' generation. He believed this was spiritually harmful and was providing the children with an inadequate spiritual model for emulation.

Stephen had high regard for children. He saw the birth of each new baby as the addition of a "Buddha."[2] Since he believed that each child came into the universe perfect, he thought they learned their incorrect and destructive habits from their parents and the cultural environment. Needless to say, this teaching placed a burden of great responsibility on parents in relation to the spiritual

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the seventh lecture.

[2]"Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, November 8, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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growth of their children.

My wife and I, in our observations of Stephen and the Family interacting with Sidney, felt that they were extremely strict. Their expectations of this young child were high. She should be interested in what they were interested in at all times. She should be willing and able to sustain the attention that they felt those activities and concerns demanded. They commented that at the Monday Night Class, the children got together and traded bad habits.[1] After each class they had to work harder to straighten Sidney up for another week. They forbade her to cry and would never yield any point to her if she was crying or being emotionally demanding. This made them appear at times as not only overly strict but also unusually firm to me. On the other hand, Sidney was very accepted in all the Family's activities. She was treated in the same physically affectionate manner as they treated each other. In all aspects of their living Sidney was included and her comments and her contribution to their life together were taken seriously.

From all this one can see that the parental role was highly valued in this spiritual community. From the moment of birth, which was seen as a moment of great spiritual significance, through the rearing, the feeding, the clothing, and the general caring for a child, the parent's role was demanding and highly valued.

Stephen and the Family preferred to live from the voluntary contributions that people made to them either directly or through the weekly voluntary collection of money at the mid-evening break

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[1]Family interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

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in the class. From this voluntary contribution the Family would take a few dollars each week to cover the gasoline expense for their school bus and to supplement what monies they needed to support their vegetarian diet. On other occasions individuals would come up and give money to a member of the Family. They were always grateful for this kind of contribution and did accept gifts. In a similar manner they were supplied with most of the psychedelic substances that they used. Sometimes in the past well-known dealers in the Haight-Ashbury community, when they got a new shipment of psychedelics, would come to Stephen and have him try them out. Later this custom fell off as he moved away from the use of the synthetic psychedelics. His own students continued to supply him and his family with marihuana and peyote. By keeping the economic basis for living so simple, they were able to de-emphasize money in the teaching process of the Monday Night Class and in their life together as the Family.

In the early days of the class the Family had counseled various rock-and-roll musicians, who were part of this psychedelic drug movement in San Francisco in the late 60s. Stephen and the Family had spent a lot of time with these groups, either at the ballrooms where they were playing or in their private living spaces, counseling and helping them understand their spiritual mission as musicians. This activity had fallen off and their counseling in 1970 was oriented to students in the Monday Night Class. Stephen commented that the rock-and-roll groups were less spiritual now. He still spoke with high regard for the Grateful Dead. He felt that in their playing they reached a spiritual place and provided a

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musical form of communion for other people. On the other hand, he was critical of groups who were becoming fascinated with violence. He disliked the materialism that grew out of their popular success and their lack of spiritual concern in their daily living. When Stephen withdrew from the Commons in early October 1969, he also withdrew from many of these kinds of counseling relationships.[1] One had to be in the Monday Night Class to draw upon Stephen and the Family for continuing counseling relationship.

The Family strengthened Stephen's own charismatic leadership by serving as a living example. They were Stephen's "earnest" of the viability of his spiritual teachings. Harmonious human intimacy could come from following his teachings. They were the social relationship in which he had been able to experiment on the behavioral basics of his own life. There he had reached agreement with the other members of the Family which was a visible manifestation of spiritual living.

The Family as an example of a lifestyle became an increasing force in the lives of the core students in the Monay Night Class during 1970. It was during that time that others in the class began to move towards group marriages for themselves. By the middle of the summer in Boulder six four-marriages had come into being in the Monday Night Class, and when the Caravan stopped for a week in Ann Arbor there were fourteen group marriages. These group marriages emulated in their daily living the concrete example of Stephen and

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[1]Family Interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

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his Family. They aspired to make the spiritual quest central to their lives also. It was in this struggle by these key students to actualize their four-marriages and to shift their living patterns in which the roots necessary for an even stronger Monday Night Class grew. Not only did his students have a regular meeting to attend and teachings to learn, but they now had specific and concrete tasks to undertake in changing their own behavior to match the Family.

Even as the teaching process itself was central to the early development of the Monday Night Class, so now the Family as a living example provided another form of social interaction that was even more intense and demanding for those who wished to become true students. The teaching process provided them with a dialogical means for experiencing Stephen's charismatic vision. The Family became the charismatic example of precisely how to live if one was to achieve progress on the spiritual path. In this sense the Family provided another means of intensifying the social interaction that strengthened the emerging community.

In summary, the Family provided Stephen with immediate support for his own teaching activity; it also was a place for working out agreements on the behavioral implications of his teachings; and it emerged in public as a living example for those who would follow Stephen. The Family was the way students should re-orient their private, personal, and intimate behavior. The Monday Night Class was a public teaching forum where Stephen learned what it was to be a spiritual teacher. The Family was the social forum in which Stephen's students could learn what it was to be a spiritual person.

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The Holy Man

The third social interaction central to the creation of this spiritual community was the emergence of Stephen as a recognizable and respected Holy Man. This, of course, was implied in the teaching relationship in the meetings; it was strengthened as the Family supported and extended his teaching efforts. Stephen, however, began to emerge publicly as a respected Holy Man in the obedience and in the deference his students proffered him. The questions his students asked him within the public meetings and in private interactions were questions that you address to a Holy Man. When you ask questions of spiritual significance for your own life, then you have granted that spiritual teacher the power to affect your most intimate behavior and immediate self-understanding. Furthermore, during the traveling of the Caravan and the resettling of the community on the Farm, Stephen decided many of the practical matters of everyday living for all his students. This confirmed his spiritual authority by grounding it comprehensively in the daily routines of their lives in these new social situations. The final test of charismatic authority, however, is the capacity to sustain the religious myth in the face of external and internal challenges to its validity. Stephen met these challenges to the religious claims of his path. First, he confronted the challenge of outsiders about the spiritual efficacy of psychedelic experience. Second, he confronted his own source of sacred experience, LSD, and evolved a

larger vision of the sacred beyond his own holy encounter with drugs. In meeting both challenges Stephen consolidated his work as the charismatic leader of this community. In so doing, he became the means by which this community transcended their immediate drug experiences and recognized in him a specific social form of religious authority for their lives, the Holy Man.

Authority created

Stephen began this development of his social role by teaching the correct relationship of student and teacher in both its metaphysical and personal aspects. He pointed to the fact that no one smoked cigarettes in his presence as an example of their respect for him as a Holy Man. He described the responsibility that he undertook when he accepted a student as "I take your Karma if you do what I say."[1] This implied a conditional relationship which could touch the deepest levels of both the student's and the teacher's spiritual sensibility. It was a mutually demanding relationship. The teacher assumed responsibility for the student's personal progress on the spiritual path. The student must grant obedience to the teacher in doing what the teacher required. Stephen reported that sometimes he asked a student to go on a ten-day diet of only brown rice to clean out his physical system. He often was sharp and very specific in the advice he gave to particular individuals and in his expectation that they would measure up to the advice by following it closely. This student-teacher relationship was supported by the other students'

[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 18, 1970.

expecting any student to follow the instruction given. When Stephen counseled a person who was a member of a group-marriage, then the other members brought their attention into helping that person; indeed, they insisted that that person follow Stephen's advice. If a student followed Stephen's advice and experienced progress along his personal spiritual pilgrimage, this confirmed Stephen's charismatic authority.

In all such exchanges Stephen and his students were creating and recognizing in him spiritual leadership of a comprehensive nature. There were few, if any, issues about which Stephen's word would not be seen as final. This charismatic authority was rooted in his personal power for interpreting, understanding, and having the psychedelic experience. Furthermore, as each student interacted with him it became more specifically manifested in terms of one's personal autobiography. Stephen was no longer only interpreting their common spiritual experience, but he provided individuals with guidance for the integration of their own abilities. He assisted them in the telling of their own personal stories about who they were, whence they came, and where indeed they were going. In this interaction they were learning to depend upon him for the discernment and discrimination of what was real, valuable, and indeed, absolute truth in their personal spiritual quests.

This relationship for most of the core students became the central defining relationship in terms of their self-understanding. They were all Stephen's students. Even in the Family there was this sense of being one of Stephen's students. Michael, the other male member of the Family, once said that he saw Stephen as his spiritual

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teacher, too.[1] Stephen's gift, recognized by all, was his ability to discern even in the specifics of their personal lives precisely what steps were needed to make spiritual progress.

I observed several examples of Stephen asserting his spiritual authority over his students as individuals in my visit to the Book Farm commune. At one point in the afternoon, Michael and I exchanged a comment about the natural stone walls in this house. I said that it was too bad that they didn't make the whole house of natural stone. Michael agreed. A little later in the conversation Stephen recalled this transaction and criticized us. "You and Michael, have a tendency to want to raise everything up one level. You know, wouldn't it be groovy if? . . . To wish the whole house was stone is wrong. What God is manifesting, and we've agreed to, is good as it is."[2] Stephen assumed responsibility for correcting us in this way.

Later, I asked another question which William Allen answered, explaining how he had to unlearn his scientific model of the universe in order to get in touch with his feelings. Stephen again corrected both of us. "There was a higher level of discussion going on before you inserted that last question. It sounded like a standard panel discussion question on the FM radio." He pointed out that William Allen had a standard psychological education, so that he was

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[1] KQED Radio Interview transcript, San Francisco, January, 1970.

[2] Book Farm group interview, Santa Rosa, California, June 18, 1970. All following quotations in this discussion are from my field notes and an audio-tape of this interview.

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pulled in by my question. "Talking is no more than commenting on the astral flow, so do it fast, then it doesn't interrupt the flow," Stephen finished.

Still later a couple of his married students had a disagreement over whether they should purchase some "bio-feedback" equipment. Stephen broke in to analyze their conversation. He was critical of the wife for storing up negative memories and then waiting until her husband opened the discussion of that matter to let him have it for all those times. "Then you become a lady psychologist, by being cold, nurse-like, saying 'I'm going to vivisect you now.'" Stephen called this astral violence on her part and advised her to avoid it in the future.

William Meyer asked Stephen whether he planned to visit New York City on his projected speaking tour next year, and then talked about his time in that city as a student at Columbia University. Stephen criticized him for getting out of the here-and-now. Also Stephen felt that William was trying to create some action. He discussed William's need to "first cause" things. Earlier William had suggested that if he had stayed at the University he might be doing a study of Stephen as I was. Stephen recalled this and said this was another example of William trying to take over in a magical way what was happening in others' lives. Stephen advised him not to try to manifest other peoples' "trips."

Another example of Stephen's intervention and intention in these transactions occurred just before supper. Joseph made a negative comparison about his wife's lack of affection compared with

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Stephen's wives. Stephen launched immediately into an analysis of why Joseph was doing this. Joseph reacted defensively to Stephen's comment instead of agreeing. He said that he had not meant the comparison to be taken so seriously. Stephen responded pointedly, "Oh, just trying to make a casual comment? You just want to shoot the shit about Spirit for a while?" Joseph immediately repented his error.

There was always this sustained seriousness within Stephen's transactions with his students. Humor was not unknown but it, too, had to have a serious purpose or point. Stephen felt the imperative need to speak the Truth all the time; casual conversation for him was too close to lying.

> Some people . . . don't exactly lie, . . . just hang around where some of it's true and some of it ain't a lot of the time, and some of it doesn't matter cause they're just like shooting the shit for a while . . . you know, "Wanta rap for a while?" I don't ever wanta rap for a while, I just don't ever wanta rap for a while. That's a hard thing to say, but like I'm not a social creature, and I don't have any manners, because I find that manners hide vibes too much, and that social things hide vibes too much. That's that hard thing about how you have to come up and do it, how you have to come up and say it to somebody, cause that's how much truth is going to be in the meeting.[1]

On the Caravan, Stephen emphasized this prohibition against just being "social," and linked it to the search for Enlightenment.

> In groups working it out I see almost no time for small talk. If everybody's enlightened there's no place for small talk, because everybody's telepathic and they all know the same thing at the same

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[1]Stephen, Monday Night Class, the first lecture.

> time. If you ain't enlightened yet there's nothing else to talk about.[1]

It was with this intense intentionality that Stephen's spiritual authority was grounded in the personal changes in his students' lives.

There were others outside of the community, who from time to time, would challenge the behavioral manifestations of this teacher and student relationship. Some of the young politically oriented persons who came to the class found Stephen's authority over his students not the kind of human relationship that they considered appropriate for the emerging new culture. This led them to interact with Stephen in a manner that was perceived by his students as disrespectful. They would engage in arguments and disagreements with him or talk amongst themselves, ignoring Stephen's attempt to explain what was happening. His usual response, when this attack on his relationship with his students occurred, was to fall into silence or to turn away from the disagreeable persons and begin a conversation with someone else. In this behavior Stephen reflected his students' understanding that these people were being disrespectful and, therefore, not seriously desiring communication with him. In this way he effectively structured the ground rules upon which he would interact with another person. If the other person were not willing to grant him a relationship of some spiritual authority, at least over his students if not over that person, then he would not pursue that

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[1]"First Unitarian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, January 7, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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conversation. In one encounter between Stephen and me before a public lecture in Ann Arbor, Stephen implied that I was one of his students; I replied that I was not his student.[1] He accepted this statement because I did not question his right to be a teacher and have other people as students. Probably, it was his assertion of the student-teacher relationship with me and my rejection of it that made visible the difference that was growing between Stephen and me on his visit to Ann Arbor.

Even greater confirmation of Stephen's spiritual authority over his students' lives was achieved during the travels of the Caravan and the resettlement of the community on the Farm in Tennessee. In both these new social situations Stephen decided many practical matters that affected the lives of all.

During the Caravan, Stephen naturally played the role of the "trail-boss" or the "wagon-master" for this procession of fifty vehicles. His word was final in mapping out the tour, selecting the routes, designating the rest-stops, figuring for the necessary gasoline stops, and negotiating with police officers for escort service through metropolitan areas and for parking facilities. Stephen forbade anyone drawing on governmental welfare benefits, and encouraged each unit to become self-supporting. His strict vegetarianism became the standard for all on the Caravan. While in Ann Arbor, Stephen collected a large sum of money and arranged to purchase the supply of marihuana for the whole community. Stephen en-

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[1]Rackham Hall meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970.

couraged the pregnant women on the Caravan to have their babies on their buses as spiritual communal events. In his teaching about the Caravan, he called it a pilgrimage; only spiritual leaders lead pilgrimages.[1]

For Stephen and his students it was natural that he should be not only their spiritual teacher but the practical leader of the Caravan. In so doing, he could integrate their everyday lives into their religious vision of how the universe worked. This was in keeping with Stephen's understanding that there should be no separation between the church and the state. "The rule is as above so below. Religion should provide the rules for manifesting the material planes."[2] The mistake of ordinary politicians was, in his view, that they tried to run the material plane on its own limited rules. This led to egocentric power games totally ungrounded in the reality of Spirit. Stephen was asked about who made the decisions on the Caravan by a questioner in Atlanta, Georgia.

> It depends on what we're deciding. We talk about everything and we all understand it. For instance I say there's a lot of people in four-marriages. . . . I never told anybody to get in a four-marriage. I never told anybody to get a bus. I never told anybody to come on a caravan. I never said any of those things. People do a lot of outrageous things for me, hard yogas. But I very seldom ever assign one to anybody. Once in a while I just might figure this fellow, this is what it takes, and say, "Hey, man, you ought to be on a seven-day word fast, and don't say anything for seven days." When I do that for somebody, they don't have do that if they don't want to. But if they

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[1]"Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, November 8, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

[2]Sunday Service meeting, San Francisco, June 21, 1970.

> do do it, they'll find out that seven days of keeping your mouth shut does a thing to your head. It'll really do it. But they do it because I said I'm enlightened, and they say, "Oh, yeah? Can anybody do that?" I say, "Yeah, anybody can do that." They say, "How do you do it?" And I say, " I don't know very many ways, but one of them is this way." So folks around me who want to be my students, who want to do it, just do it, just do what I do. And I don't tell people don't do things so much. Sometimes we stop and we'll just hassle it out, however long it takes, and sometimes I expect to be able to say, "Let's do it now," and that we can move. It's the trust we establish by hassling it out that makes it so I can say, "Let's move now," and everybody moves, because we move out of trust. If I lost my trust I could say, "Let's do it now," and nothing would happen. That's the inner meat of the question.[1]

This approach to blending the practical and the spiritual authority in the community in Stephen's charismatic role as the Holy Man continued, from all reports, when they moved to the Farm. In a "Farm Report" which they published in a Tennessee newspaper in December, 1971, they describe their own social organization.

> Everyone who lives on The Farm follows Stephen as his personal spiritual teacher and values his counsel on how to change. Stephen believes that all men are capable of change, and he teaches them how to improve their lives by being peaceful and honest. Living with him requires a willingness to have not just your outward actions but your innermost thoughts always illuminated by the clear light of spiritual purity. It works out that The Farm is a non-denominational family monastery with Stephen as the head of the household.[2]

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[1] "Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia, January 2, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

[2] "The Farm Report," The Daily Herald (Columbia, Tennessee), Thursday, December 9, 1971, 1-B.

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Stephen has been recognized by the Tennessee authorities as a clergyman, and during their first year he performed marriage ceremonies for forty-six couples in the community. The Farm Report tells of their continuing attempts to design a healthy, nutritionally balanced vegetarian diet. In 1973, Edward B. Fiske, religion editor of the New York Times, visited The Farm. In his report he reviews their history, their legal trials, and provides a portrait of their social life. In one sentence he captures an apt picture of Stephen's authority with his students.

> Life at The Farm is organized around the teachings of Stephen, who serves as spiritual leader, makes all major decisions and enforces discipline--ranging from reprimands to temporary exile--in counseling sessions reminiscent of the opening scene of the film 'The Godfather.'[1]

The student-teacher relationship blended together the spiritual and the practical concerns in an individual's life so that Stephen's charismatic authority was firmly grounded within the interpersonal and intrapsychic order of the community. In this way Stephen's role as the Holy Man was internally assured.

Authority challenged

Throughout their existence as a community, and especially during their Caravan travels, Stephen and the Monday Night Class were challenged in several ways by outsiders. More often than not, this challenge focused on their usage of psychedelic drugs. In meeting this challenge, they had to seek ways of interacting with outsiders

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[1] Edward B. Fiske, "At Tennessee Farm Commune, Marihuana is a part of Religion," New York Times, February 17, 1973, second section, first page and 39.

which maintained their communal defintion of their way of life as religious.

From the view point of the established American middle-class their drug usage was illegal and immoral. Also their sexual and family patterns involving group marriage and communal living at a subsistence level were socially aberrant. In all this they were breaking away from their parents' expectations for their sons and daughters by engaging in behavior that violated explicitly and implicitly the moral and legal codes in the areas of drugs and sex. They were ridiculing and criticizing their parents' generation and its social aspirations. In many instances their parents challenged them for their choices and argued the wisdom of their behavior. Yet in many instances their parents were obviously open to discussion about these matters, as painful as it was.

During 1970, Stephen expressed the desire for himself and for his students to get "straight" with their parents. He felt it was time to meet this challenge openly.

> Now us must mean everybody. I can't talk about the establishment anymore, all I can talk about is our parents. Calling them the establishment puts them in a place of calling us the anti-establishment. I'd rather call them our parents and cop that we're their kids. They're getting old, and they're afraid that we're too dumb to take over the show.[1]

Earlier in the psychedelic drug movement of the young Americans, some effort and delight were put into upsetting the older generation

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[1] "River City Free Trade Zone, Iowa City, Iowa, November 5, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

of parents. This tone was not usually present in Stephen, and while I was with them, a program of reaching out to make positive contact with parents became a goal of the Monday Night Class. One of the reasons they gave for traveling in the Caravan was to see their parents and to try to gain their tolerant understanding of, if not complete agreement with, what their spiritual community was doing.

> We came out to visit our parents, because we're from all over the United States and we figured one of the things we had to do to get cool was to get cool with our parents. So we've been making a try at it, stopping by and talking to them and finding out if we can get it together. And we can a lot of the time. Most of us have been able to connect with our parents, and there are parents coming out from all over to visit us. We had folks drive up from Florida to meet us here, because this was the closest we were getting to where they were, to come see their children and come meet their teacher. A lot of parents come in to see me saying, "Where you going with all our kids?" I feel like I've got to talk to those folks as long as they're being straight with me and trying to find out that answer. So we're doing that, being that.[1]

Stephen and the members of his family again led the way in these efforts by contacting their own parents. Other members of the core students also wrote their parents about what they were doing and arranged to visit them during their travels.

There is evidence that some successful agreements were made with parents. Two brothers in the community did make successful contact with their parents near Philadelphia, and received letters of encouragement and support from their mother. The mother had been informed of their respective four-marriages, and had begun to

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[1]"Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia, January 2, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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address her letters to all four persons. Later when the community had settled on the Farm in Tennessee, an open invitation was extended to family members to come and to see how they were living. One psychology professor and his wife, who had a son and daughter-in-law on the Farm, visited them during the first year in Tennessee. While the father expressed some questions about his son's chosen way of life, nevertheless, he was impressed by their spiritual sincerity and the honest work the community was doing. Later he arranged for a visit by Stephen to the University where he was teaching.

Their interaction with police officers was also illustrative of how they chose to deal with the official American social order. I was present on two occasions when Stephen encountered police, and also heard him tell of other occasions in his teachings. In all such encounters he stressed the importance of being straight with the cops. In contrast to many of the young alienated Americans, Stephen never sought conflict with the police, always treating them with respect. He was not obsequious in his manner, but rather careful and straight forward in his approach and conversation. He appeared to go out of his way to be sensitive to their possible feelings of fear in interacting with a beatnik. He spoke honestly in answer to their questions, but avoided bringing up matters of his illegal drug usage. I know of one time that he hasseled a border officer in Canada, and once he lied to a New York State Police officer about his possession of marihuana.[1] Later he spoke of both incidents with regret.

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[1]"Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont, November 23, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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Early in the travels of the Caravan in Oregon, they were arrested for possessing drugs.[1] Stephen told me of this encounter with enthusiasm, for he was pleased he worked out an agreement with the local authorities to return later for a trial on a minimal charge, and the Caravan was then allowed to continue its travels. During his visit in Ann Arbor, Stephen publicly and privately spoke with affection for the way the state police had helped the large Caravan of fifty vehicles. In Ann Arbor he and I had to negotiate a place for them to stay with the local county sheriff and the city's assistant police chief. Later Stephen was critical of my interaction, but found the police officers to be honest and excellent men.

The fullest case of this interaction with police that I observed was in the late spring of 1970 in Sprekels field in the Golden Gate Park.[2] About thirty of Stephen's students were sharing marihuana and peyote tea, and conversing with the Family, when three policemen on motor scooters appeared. The marihuana disappeared, but the peyote tea was in large gallon glass jugs which no one attempted to hide. Stephen greeted their arrival, and he and the sergeant in charge conversed about five minutes. The policeman asked what we were doing; Stephen told him this was a religious meeting, and he was a teacher. After a few more simple exchanges the sergeant suggested we continue. So Stephen said "Let's Om a bit." He blew on his cow's horn and we all chanted for four or five minutes until the

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[1]Stephen interview, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 10, 1970.

[2]Golden Gate Park meeting, San Francisco, May 22, 1970.

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officers rolled their motorscooters away and left us. Afterwards there was some laughter of relief, but no comments by Stephen or others about fooling the cops. Instead Stephen used this encounter as an example of "being cool" and not getting into trouble with the cops about your drug usage.

Stephen never permitted anyone to call the police "Pigs." He always insisted that this was disrespectful of another human being, and could only [illegible] on you and also possible trouble in the e[illegible]

> I don't [illegible]lly think about it wants [illegible] isn't relevant. What yo[illegible]b, take care of traffic [illegible]e street, keep the bur[illegible]ocery store, that tri[illegible] hurting them, so how ab[illegible]e cop into being groovy. W[illegible]oss the country in no way camou[illegible]ten or twenty miles of highway whe[illegible]. When we come through a town the people's [illegible] stay good and they keep smiling and their eyes are shiny, but their hands begin to drag after a while because they get tired of waving to so many of us. And we have been in massive engagements with the police of eight or ten states across the country, and I have not sold out anything I believe in to deal with any of those cops. All I have done is treat them as human beings--as I would like to be treated--tell them what we were doing, and the way has been made open for us. We have been treated well, shown where to park, not hassled, taken good care of.[1]

This approach to managing and avoiding conflict with police shows the general inclination Stephen encouraged in his students for interacting with official American society. In his teachings he was

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[1]"University of Michigan, Rackham Hall, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 12, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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Stephen never permitted anyone to call the police "Pigs." He always insisted that this was disrespectful of another human being, and could only bring bad karma on you and also possible trouble in the encounter.

> I don't know anybody who if they really think about it wants to hurt a cop, because that isn't relevant. What you want is the cop to do his job, take care of traffic, help little ladies across the street, keep the burglars from busting into the grocery store, that trip. There's nothing served by hurting them, so how about if you can just talk the cop into being groovy. We've been coming out across the country in no way camouflaged. We take up ten or twenty miles of highway when we're rolling. When we come through a town the people's vibes stay good and they keep smiling and their eyes are shiny, but their hands begin to drag after a while because they get tired of waving to so many of us. And we have been in massive engagements with the police of eight or ten states across the country, and I have not sold out anything I believe in to deal with any of those cops. All I have done is treat them as human beings--as I would like to be treated--tell them what we were doing, and the way has been made open for us. We have been treated well, shown where to park, not hassled, taken good care of.[1]

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critical of the American Way of Life, but he taught avoidance of conflict, withdrawal from the major social ways of living, and a positive reaching out to re-establish new relationships that would generate mutual respect and trust on both sides. In my observations, the community achieved considerable success in gaining respectful and trusting interaction with their middle-class parents and most of the official representatives of American society.

Parents, police officers, and other middle-Americans confronted this spiritual community in ways which usually allowed for some pragmatic resolution of conflicts, and therefore, they presented no real ideological threat to their religious understanding of themselves. "Closer to home" challenges appeared among others who identified with them in so far as they shared a sense of the psychedelic drug experience and a general political and social disaffiliation from the larger social order. These were their "fellow travelers," members of their own generation to whom they felt more closely akin and to whom they owed some accounting for their religious choice. This group of usually young and alienated intellectuals challenged the religious claims of the Monday Night Class directly and indirectly.

The simplest and most direct way in which this challenge occurred was in the disruptive encounters within the public meetings. In both San Francisco and in Ann Arbor, the most articulate challenges came from those who favored a political interpretation of this "generation's" experience and argued for a political movement instead of a religious one. There was a continuing discussion and argument about the true revolution among the young. Stephen was

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unsparing in his criticism of politics.

> Remember Jesus' saying about 'Render unto Caesar, and render unto God.' I say, now do God's; forget Caesar. He doesn't know any way. Just forget politics. [1]

He contended with these challengers that the genuine revolution was the ancient and continuing spiritual revolution started by persons like Buddha, Krishna, and Jesus. "The real one has been going on for 200,000 years now. And its purpose is to get the whole world off together. Not one of us can get as high as possible until all are high."[2] This is why he always said that the basic revolution was to straighten up yourself. Violent revolutionaries in his view made the mistake of always trying to change everybody else instead of changing their own lives.

> A straight person draws others to him. His example helps others to get straight also. That is the way of the real revolution. This is what Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and any other avatar is really about. The material plane tends to run down according to the laws of entropy. The avatars by straightening up, open this plane up to the Spirit, which refreshes the material plane. . . . This group here is the one who keeps America together. The rulers in the material plane just tell where the monopoly money is going and distributes it, but they don't really refresh the culture like those involved in the Spirit do. [3]

Often he was attacked because of the autocratic manner in which he led the meetings and advised his students about their living. Many of the young at this time were highly critical of

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[1] Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, April 27, 1970.

[2] Sunday Service meeting, San Francisco, June 21, 1970.

[3] Sunday Service meeting, San Francisco, June 21, 1970.

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leaders who attempted to organize other persons' lives. These critics wanted more participatory democracy in the meetings. Stephen gave this argument little notice. He said that no one had to be here; they could always leave, but he would speak the truth as he saw it in the here-and-now irrespective of their feelings.

> I can't be attached to any particular person. I couldn't do this gig if I was. I interrupt him to label it 'anger,' to install a handle for us so that it doesn't get into all of our subconscious. That's my job here.[1]

He was here to provide an organizing focus so that the group-mind could get itself together in these meetings and experience communion. This was a function he performed at the request of his students, and was totally without egocentric aims. As one of his students said, "Look, Stephen is a teacher, we are his pupils, that's the way this meeting works." And another student continued this response to the political challengers, "Stephen helps us get it together each week. Look these guys are just laying down shit. They are the reality we are trying to change."[2]

Stephen was adept at dealing with these disruptions. Some of these occasions reminded me of the children's game "King of the Mountain." This was Stephen's mountain and the rules that he and his class had evolved over four years together made it impossible for one person or even a small group to overcome Stephen in a public meeting. Nevertheless, these challenges were occasions which Stephen took seriously, and he had to win them fairly and with appropriate

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, June 1, 1970.

[2]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 25, 1970.

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showing of compassion for his challengers or he could damage his claim to be a religious teacher. Sometimes he and the Family would discuss a particular exchange after class and they would suggest ways in which he could increase his capacity to deal with disruptions in a more spiritual manner. Over the years it was obvious that he had developed certain answers or strategies for these situations which were repeated with success. These increased the predictability of control and the sense of correctness for Stephen and his students.

Another kind of threat to their claim to use psychedelic drugs for religious reasons emerged in a negative manner from within the general psychedelic drug movement. Stephen was called upon to account for others of public notoriety who made similar claims for their drug usage. Two examples of such figures were Timothy Leary and Charles Manson. The latter, who was quite prominent in the newspapers during 1969 and 1970, was the easiest for Stephen to discount. Stephen felt that Manson was an example of the spiritual corruption of the psychedelic experience. One time he said "Manson was playing death games for kicks with the Hollywood actors and it got out of hand, and he manifested death."[1] Manson was not taken seriously as a religious teacher using drugs, and his association with violence, guns, and jeeps in the desert proved this for Stephen and his students.

Timothy Leary, on the other hand, was a serious problem. He had been in the first Holy Man Jam that Stephen had organized in

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[1]Family interview, San Francisco, June 10, 1970.

October 1969 at the Family Dog.[1] Stephen and his family had spent time with Leary, trying to get him to give up his political effort to run for Governor in California so that he could settle down in San Francisco and be a Holy Man. Stephen honored Leary for being one of the founders of the psychedelic movement and for his willingness to say that it was a religious thing he was doing. But, increasingly, as Leary's exploits led to jail, then an escape, and finally an underground existence outside of the United States, Stephen disassociated himself from Leary. Especially, when Leary began to advocate some selective revolutionary violence for self-defense, Stephen disavowed Leary as a spiritual teacher. Finally, during 1970 Stephen publicly taught that LSD was not really useful anymore because people like Timothy Leary had devalued its sacramental power. Increasingly, he disassociated his religious life and his spiritual community from the personalities, the general practices, and the ideas of the larger psychedelic drug movement. He would not be accountable for others' "weirdnesses."

The most serious testing of his spiritual authority, however, came not from Middle-America or from other "generational" sensibilities and perspectives among the young, but in the many encounters Stephen had with other Holy Men. These Holy Men became the religious challengers of Stephen and his psychedelic path. They were persons living out religious traditions that were ancient, honorable,

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[1]Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, May 18, 1970. Also, Boulder Whole Earth Fair, Boulder, Colorado, Friday and Saturday, July 24-25, 1970. Also, Drug-Help meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 11, 1970.

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and detailed in their practice. They were people who had won their own following among the young, even young people who had first seen a "light" using psychedelic drugs much as Stephen and his students had. In these social encounters at the various Holy Man Jams, Stephen was called to account for his teaching and his practice in ways that demanded religious sensitivity and deftness if he were to sustain his claim as a Holy Man. He had to show respect to them, while disagreeing with them about significant matters of religious life.

Swami Satchidananda, who appeared with Stephen in the One Festival in San Francisco and at the Boulder, Colorado Whole Earth Fair, was highly regarded by Stephen and his followers, and yet he was the clearest about rejecting the usage of psychedelic drugs as a spiritual path.[1] Yogi Bhajan, also present at both events, engaged Stephen in vigorous debate about the use of drugs.[2] Stephen also was frequently questioned by followers of Yoga, Zen, etc. as to why he did not give up drugs as unnecessary or even harmful in spiritual development.

Stephen gave two kinds of answers to these challenges. One, "I can't out run my body politic."[3] By this he meant his students

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[1]Holy Men meeting, Boulder, Colorado, Friday, July 24, 1970.

[2]Stephen and Yogi Bhajan interview, Boulder, Colorado, Saturday, July 25, 1970.

[3]Stephen and Swami Satchidananda interview, Boulder, Colorado, Saturday, July 25, 1970.

who were spiritually developing as fast as they could, and Stephen felt a responsibility to grow with them in the spiritual path that drugs had given them. Two, "We didn't even know Spirit existed until psychedelics showed us it was real because this culture is so materialistic."[1] Stephen was arguing that psychedelics were the appropriate sacrament for our "spiritually barren," materialistic, and technological country.[2] Anything less powerful would not have worked.

Stephen was changed by this dialogue as it occurred during the years of 1969 and 1970. At best he achieved a tolerance of his teachings by the other Holy Men in these encounters. From Yogi Bhajan, perhaps, even a grudging agreement that Stephen was on a spiritual path, even if it was a "thorny" one, and his students would be okay.[3] From the Swami and others, the tolerance was silent acceptance. In their public teachings all agreed about the basic spiritual ideas of "oneness" and the need to be compassionate. Further, Stephen proved himself to be an adept speaker, a master of answering questions in public dialogue. His students appeared to lead healthy and spiritual lives. On so many practical details of diet, sexual faithfulness, family and child rearing, etc. the many spiritual principles seemed self-evident to all teachers. All in all, the religious claim Stephen made for his psychedelic path was

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[1]Holy Men meeting, Boulder, Colorado, Friday, July 24, 1970.

[2]University Christian Church meeting, Boulder, Colorado, Sunday, July 26, 1970.

[3]Stephen and Yogi Bhajan interview, Boulder, Colorado, Saturday, July 25, 1970.

strengthened in the minds of his students by the gracefulness with which Stephen managed these encounters with the other Holy Men.

These then were several of the external challenges to their ability to sustain and to evolve a religious interpretation of their drug experience and their living patterns. In meeting these tests they were maintaining and extending their definition of religious reality, and they were creating clearer and more detailed forms of social authority for constructing their religious vision. It was not so important that they convert others to their way; sometimes they did. It was even more significant that they gained respect and tolerance, sometimes even appreciation, from those "outside of our camp." They self-consciously chose to reach out to have these encounters with parents, police, revolutionary politicians, doctors, lawyers, scholars, clergy, and just "plain" folk wherever they found them. This became a major part of their activity especially during their cross-country tour on the Caravan. Their success at it obviously delighted them, and strengthened their sense of communal solidarity and authority. Stephen spoke with greater authority. It was this authoritative grasp of the Truth that could give them a new ability to live together as a continuing community and even take up the challenge of the Farm in Tennessee. Stephen was truly "King of the Mountain" for they had seen him challenged in many places and many ways, but they were still together, and together with him they could not only hear and speak the truth, but do it!

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Transcendent Authority

The other side to the external challenge to the community's religious usage of drugs, was the very significant internal challenge emerging from their own evolution as a spiritual community. Their evolving patterns of drug usage and their growing understanding of the psychedelic experience as their source of sacred experience were creating visible stresses and strains which were further stimulated by the questions from outsiders. Their encounter with the Holy had been primarily through psychedelic drugs, the impersonal, chemical substances in either snythetic or organic form. It produced in them interior experiences of size and emotional vibrancy. It gave them the insight into the mysterious but real interior of the Cosmos itself, the Spirit. It marked them and changed them. It provided them with the impetus to gather and to share their experiences in a common search for meaning in the Monday Night Class. Even as they continued to re-evaluate and rearrange their lifestyles to reflect their new awareness of the spiritual richness of being human, drugs were readily available for repeated usage. Many of them had used high energy psychedelic drugs numerous times; all of them used marihuana or peyote tea on a daily basis. Yet, as they re-did their lives and tried to understand the Spirit, the question began to emerge: Is Dope all we are about? Is it the sum and center of our religious vision?

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They had come into being as a group that learned to use psychedelic drugs for their spiritual development; now they used only some drug substances and in certain ways. Stephen had emerged in San Francisco as a person who could show you how to use drugs spiritually; now he was seeing himself as a religious teacher who used some drugs, sometimes, and for certain purposes. In this shift, his development as the community's religious authority, standing above even the psychedelic encounter with the Holy, was beginning to manifest itself. Stephen did not wish to talk only about dope to his students or to outside questioners; there were other more important spiritual matters to be discussed. This shift in their relationship to the psychedelic experience as their encounter with the Holy can be traced in the evolution of their teachings about dope.

It is clear that "dope is a teacher." Stephen specifically reiterated this as part of his defense of why he still used marihuana and peyote in the Holy Man Jams. He thought that an LSD trip might be useful for some people still. Functionally, the drug experience was effective because it could "clean out the subconscious," or "rip off your ego for awhile." There was also a sense in which the drug experience was a positive revelation of Spirit, that is the fundamental basis of cosmic reality. Developing insights, however, were beginning to qualify this dependence on the teaching function of the psychedelic experience.

Dope was no longer seen as the only or even the best teacher. Others including Stephen, could also "rip off your ego" by just interacting with you and/or suggesting some strenuous practical

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steps you needed to follow to set your foot on the path toward Enlightenment. Moreover, Stephen and other teachers could tell you the Truth. They had the power to both see such Truth in the here-and-now and to call it forcefully and persuasively to your attention.

Further, the psychedelic experience was not an automatic teacher of the Truth. Earlier in the general psychedelic drug movement there was a sense that, when you took a certain drug, it took you to a particular place inside yourself and the universe. That this was unfailingly a useful experience of Truth was no longer assumed by Stephen and his class. Stephen said on several occasions during 1970 that you might even take LSD and not really get high.

> Dope by itself is anything you want it to be. You can manifest anything you want on dope. . . . It takes character and integrity to get high on acid or not on acid. [1]

This was related to a person's intention in taking it. If one were taking it just for fun then this attitude would not provide the kind of careful attention required to have a spiritual vision of Truth. This insight was related to the larger perspective that they had evolved about their psychedelic drugs: they were simply another form of energy available for human usage. Therefore, the way you chose to use this energy would determine its worth in your spiritual development.

Drugs had been a helpful way for his students, and continued to be, but they were only a source of energy, neither to be despised nor to be overly exalted. After all there were other sources of

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[1] Monday Night Class meeting, San Francisco, March 16, 1970.

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energy. Good food could get you high. Being present at the birth of a child could get you high. All forms of good caring human interaction, especially sexual forms, could get you high. The advice, growing in Stephen's teachings to his students, was that there were many sources of energy; use them all and be Spirit-filled all the time. This teaching was an outgrowth of their keen interest in and continuing evaluation of human interaction in general, and especially those moments of natural human ecstasy. Finally, Stephen was teaching that "one man's energy is enough to get one man high and keep him there."[1] Being high was your natural spiritual birthright as a human being; civilization had led people away from this state of being. Drugs had been the sacramental breakthrough for this generation, but they were only one source of the energy you needed for being high. Dope, then, is a path, but it is not the goal.

Another effect of their drug experience was replacing the total experience and making drugs themselves only a tool. This effect was the experience of their power to be telepathic with each other. The image of what it was to be spiritually high had emerged from their drug experiences but now it became conceptually distinct. The power and the center of the Holy was revealed in the telepathic group-mind experience of the Monday Night Class. Their telepathic humanness became the real experiential center for their teachings, their living practices, and the goal toward which the community

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[1]Holy Men meeting, Boulder, Colorado, July 24, 1970.

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under Stephen's leadership began to move.

This was a move beyond drugs to an experience beyond words. Telepathic humanness became the symbolic means by which they transcended psychedelics and recognized Stephen as their central spiritual authority, the Holy Man. Evidence of this evolution is seen in both behavioral and ideological changes concerning psychedelic drug usage in this community. Stephen had shifted away from LSD used as frequently as weekly in 1969 to only using organic drugs by the summer of 1970. By late 1970 he taught all of his students on the Caravan to accept this restriction on their drug usage. Even though psychedelic experience had been the spiritual path of first awakening for all of them it was increasingly assigned a subsidiary place in their total behavior and in Stephen's teachings. Drugs could be misused; acid might be reality, but you could also take it in the wrong attitude and not even really get high. It was a helpful but no longer necessary experience in your search for Enlightenment. Stephen might ask you to do other things, even as he now had, in giving up the usage of LSD. It had served its purpose in this community's development. It had revealed the existence of Spirit and also the natural form of spiritual humanness as telepathic awareness. From the personal psychedelic drug experience which they shared in common as a spiritual revelation, they now shifted to a social image of Spirit, the telepathic community. This reality was to be found not in the psychedelic experience itself but rather incarnated in Stephen's teaching and leadership of the community.

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Stephen elaborated a symbolic model for a natural cosmic humanness based on the telepathic experience.

> And we got to that place, and then she came inside my head, and her face appeared inside my head so I could see it in my mind's eye, and she became a cat and smiled at me, and my whole life changed. Right on the spot my whole life changed, because that was the closest, most intimate communication that I'd ever had and it was the one I'd been looking for all the time. I didn't know I was looking for it, but when it happened I said, "That's it, that's the one. People can get to people." People can get to people . . . something closer than the written word, something closer than the spoken word, something closer than gesture, something closer than touch. You can just look in from mind to mind. At first, when I started coming on, I didn't realize what that was that we were doing, and I didn't realize the implications of it, but I just started studying it and doing it and getting high every chance I got and going to a place where I could be in communication with someone. . . . And so we tried to figure out what it was about, what it was like to be in that mental condition with other people . . . what were the ground rules. As we started inventing and creating ground rules we had what we called our patchwork quilt. We started noticing that the ground rules that we created were quite similar to some other things that we had seen for a long time and didn't know what they were. What we started finding out was that the ground rules for telepathic communication are expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. What the Sermon on the Mount is about is the condition you have to keep your head in if you're going to be able to have company at all. That's the thing about telepathy--you've got to keep your head clean if you're going to have telepathy, because when somebody looks into your head it's nonselective, and they see everything you got. If you follow the implications of this idea you can have an understanding of the psychedelic experience deeper than most folks have.[1]

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[1]"Edgehill Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, January 6, 1971" in Stephen, The Caravan.

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The natural human was a state of spiritual being that was achievable in a pre-verbal and a pre-civilized telepathic togetherness.

> At its nitty-gritty religion is supposed to be non-verbal. A couple of monkeys are supposed to be able to look at each other and know that each other's cool. And if you can't, somebody's faking it. Now if that makes ninety-nine per cent of your relationships weird, maybe you've got to straighten up.[1]

They were all fragments of God in search of Himself in rediscovered telepathic community. Stephen called the behavioral basics the monkey rules, because he did not want humans to believe they were fundamentally different at the spiritual level from other sentient beings in the universe. Words were a trap encouraging us to be conceptual and out of the here-and-now state of no-mind. The really important agreements which the community came to were arrived at not by agreement at the linguistic level, but rather in telepathic mind-to-mind communication that was unspoken. All of us have the energy to maintain this state of awareness and spirit-filled humanness without drugs if we are living correctly in harmony with the universe and each other. This became the practical and the ultimate goal that Stephen and his community set themselves to achieve in all their meetings, travels, and finally in the farming community in Tennessee. In the second Farm Report Stephen says,

> The basis of our church is soul communication. We believe that to pray means to communicate with. You can pray with your fellow man, or you can pray to God. It's to communicate by soul communication from heart to heart, without having to speak. We believe in that really a lot. In fact, the reason

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[1] "University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, January 12, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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> we are so gathered on this farm is not because of anything that anybody ever said aloud as a reason for us being together but an agreement that we have come to somewhere beyond speech, somewhere past speech.[1]

In this evolution of his teaching about drugs, Stephen met the internal challenge to his emergence as the central spiritual authority in this community. Stephen led his students to accept him as the mediator of their communal sense of sacredness, the group-mind. In this telepathic humanness he offered them a new symbol of the encounter with the Holy. In his role as the Holy Man, he took responsibility for mediating this socially experienced sacredness. Now their sense of transcendent authority was provided in his work and his person. No longer would they turn to LSD to encounter the Holy. Instead, Stephen, the Holy Man, would be the means for a continuing encounter with the Holy as revealed in their own everyday lives and their class meetings.

A confirming manifestation of the crucial significance of Stephen's role as the Holy Man was his own sense that there were times when he spoke with infallibility, i.e. without spiritual error. In San Francisco, I did not hear this theme. There were many behavioral manifestations which certainly assumed that Stephen could speak accurately about absolute spiritual truth. His core students responded to him and listened to his teachings in that way. The fact that so many of them were changing their lives and were willing to take his specific advice so seriously for correcting their be-

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[1]"The Farm Report," second edition, December, 1972, privately printed and distributed.

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havior, exhibited their acceptance of this, at least as an operational principle. For them, Stephen was capable of speaking with absolute correctness. It was during the time and the travels of the Caravan that this theme appeared in Stephen's public teaching. I heard it for the first time in Ann Arbor. At one point when he was being challenged, he answered that there was a time and a place in a meeting in which he was able, as the guide of the group-mind, to discern without mistake what was the Truth in the here-and-now.

> I conduct the meetings; they let me; I'm just an instrument; the people give me energy by agreement. . . . There is a time when I make mistakes, but when I have everybody's telepathic agreement I don't. If I do then I'm on my own and I have to "trial and error" it out until I get back in communication with that place. In the Monday Night Class we work to get high then we tell truth at that place.[1]

At a later meeting he repeated this theme of being able to speak without a mistake. He was discussing the Monday Night Class and how it worked. As the meeting progressed through the questions and answers they came to a good agreement, then, "there is a place where I don't make mistakes . . . as long as I am doing it for the benefit of everyone."[2] When he was at that place he was like a king at a coronation, full of the Spirit, compassionate. This was the place of telepathic agreement of the group-mind. A month later when the Caravan visited in Rhode Island, Stephen broadened this sense of infallibility to include his whole manner of acting as a teacher.

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[1]Drug-Help meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 11, 1970.

[2]Alice Lloyd Dormitory meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 11, 1970.

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> There's a new level of consciousness and I represent it. . . . I never asked anybody to get a bus and never asked anybody to come with me on a caravan and I never asked anybody to tape a book for me and I never asked anybody to type it and I never asked anybody to publish it. I never asked for any of those things. All those things were just given to me. I've been doing pretty straight for five years. Sometimes I go months or maybe a year at a time without making a mistake.[1]

His authority and power to create the spiritual community is founded on this broadened sense of his perfection.

The critical role and the power of the spiritual teacher in the life of a community were recurring themes in Stephen's teachings during the Caravan's travels. While he visited in Ann Arbor in 1970, he defended his belief that every community needed a spiritual teacher to guide it. He proposed that the beatniks in Ann Arbor needed one especially, because they did not understand how to hold a good meeting. One of his listeners responded that perhaps his teaching was really an imposition on his students. Stephen replied that all can take it or leave it, but the Truth is one, and he had to speak it as he saw it at that place. Another person suggested that he might be seeing a different truth. Stephen denied that this was really possible at the level of spiritual Truth.

> No, that ain't the case. There is a reality that is real. Schools have taught relativity too much. Everybody knows what's going on all the time. Just cop to it. . . . I'm a psychedelic Martin Luther. He said, 'Read the Bible for yourself; you don't need a priest to interpret.' I go a step further,

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[1]Cantell and Gross, "A Talk with Stephen Gaskin," 144.

> have the experience and decide by yourself; do it with drugs or a teacher. The experience is to get ripped off of your ego.[1]

In this statement Stephen equated the capacity of the teacher with the capacity of the psychedelic experience for producing a holy encounter for a student.

In Evanston, Illinois Stephen elaborated his notion of the meaning and the power of the teacher's role in a meeting.

> It's not a question of right agreement or wrong agreement, it's a question of agreement or no agreement, and you can tell what the agreement is because that's what all this is. This is what we agreed on, because here we are. Now my function as teacher is to try to tell us that this is the agreement--this is how good the agreement is now--and if we want to have it better here and in the world, then we have to make our agreement better.[2]

The teacher tells the community what he sees as the level of spiritual consensus they have reached. He is a true witness of their telepathic humanness. In Dayton, Ohio, he pointed to the power given to the teacher in his use of the "group head" in a meeting.

> Also I have been giving lecture things for a long time. This is a telepathic phenomenon. I get the use of the group head when we're all together here like this. Like you guys are letting me use this group head. This is a fine group head. It's a smart one and I knew it was heavy during the Om, it felt strong, and I enjoyed getting to talk about this kind of stuff. Sometimes I can't talk about

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[1]Canterbury House meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 13, 1970.

[2]"Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, November 8, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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> this. Sometimes the highest level of discourse I can reach is, "Thou shalt not kill."[1]

The meeting, then, contributes to the teacher's ability to speak the Truth; its particular quality will shape the content of the teacher's sayings that evening. On Long Island, New York, Stephen told of how the community had taught him to be their spiritual teacher.

> Actually religion is re-legion: people coming together again. That's how I got to be a teacher; in the process of working out what we worked out, I got to a place where I'd give advice on how to trip, and then I found out life was a trip. Then I had to give advice on how to live.[2]

What had begun as his advice on how to use drugs based on his personal expertise became generalized into advice on how to live as a spiritual person based on their recognition of his spiritual authority.

Near the end of the travels of the Caravan, Stephen expressed his power as a Holy Man, the power to directly help others stay on the spiritual path.

> I'm a spiritual teacher. As a spiritual teacher, talking is a hobby with me. Talking isn't really where it's at. That isn't really what I do the most of or even what I do best. I do other things. It's hard for me to talk in this area just because it's this area. It's just so heavy. But I make people be better because I want them to be better. I can look at somebody who isn't in very good shape and want

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[1]"Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, November 16, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

[2]"State University of New York at Stony Brook, Long Island, New York, December 8, 1970," in Stephen, The Caravan.

> them to be in better shape and they get in better shape, just because I want them to. And I've been living with that kind of situation for five years now. And how I be now is the result of following that. There's something I found out I can do, and I'll junk everything else if I can keep doing that, because it looks like the thing to do. So I've been following that and that's what makes me be here and now doing this.[1]

Spiritual power as manifested in the Holy Man begins and ends in the power of telepathic humanness, beyond words, beyond LSD. Stephen's spiritual authority rests in his ability to see this "agreement" in the meeting, in the communal capacity to create the "group head," and in his personal power to strengthen his students with just his mental attention. The social role of the Holy Man gives symbolic form to the grounding of their religious vision, no longer in their drug experiences, but rather in their social experience of telepathic humanness. In Stephen's testimony that sometimes he can speak the Truth and even live without mistakes, i.e. spiritual infallibility, a long social development in the Monday Night Class reached its culmination in the public teachings.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a descriptive interpretation of the specific social processes by which Stephen and his students constructed their religious community. In so doing, I have documented their development from the myth moment to the ethos moment in their religious drug usage. The general question guiding this pre-

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[1] "University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, January 12, 1971," in Stephen, The Caravan.

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sentation was: is there an observable decline in their drug usage as they socially develop a religious understanding of their life and of their drug experience? My answer to this question is affirmative.

By means of the three major social processes, i.e. the Monday Night Class meetings, the Family, and the Holy Man, Stephen and his students worked to reconstruct their everyday behavior, so that it reflected more fully their religious myth, and so that they achieved a communal experience of wholesome social relatedness. In these social processes for making and legitimating their spiritual community, they also produced a shift in the center of their encounter with the sacred, away from their original expanded biological self-awareness on psychedelic drugs and towards the multiple sources of sacredness found in their social experience as a religiously renewed community. As the ideal-type model of religious drug usage suggested, this shift is evidence of the transformation of the experiential grounding of their religious myth and the creation of a social form of spiritual authority for mediating and confirming this communal vision. Stephen's emergence as the Holy Man consolidated and completed this transformation in their lives. They had transcended the non-human charisma of psychedelic drugs by replacing it with the personal charismatic authority of Stephen. Their transcendent vision was now rooted in their social selves.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS

Summary of This Case

Is there a case of genuine religious drug usage among young Americans today? If so, is there an observable decline in their drug usage as they socially develop a religious understanding of their life and of their drug experience? These were the two general questions that I asked myself as I began the field research that led to this study of Stephen and the Monday Night Class. My answer to both questions now is yes.

Most of the scholars discussed in Chapter One agreed that a positive example of religious psychedelic drug usage should meet three criteria. First, the subjects would report their hallucinogenic experience in religious categories as an awesome encounter with a sacred cosmos. Second, they would use this holy encounter to create, from the cultural resources at hand, their own myth of ultimate meaningfulness. Third, based on the drug encounter and the sacred myth, they would begin to transform their everyday behavior to reflect their new religious understanding. These three criteria are useful for examining the religious claims of a community of drugs users who are trying to create a new religious movement based on their psychedelic experience.

On the basis of the case study reported in Chapters Two and Three, I believe Stephen and the Monday Night Class fulfill these

three criteria. They are an example of a religious usage of the psychedelic experience during a time of many psychedelic drug users who made similar claims without discernable success at meeting these three criteria.

They reported and recognized non-religious interpretations of psychedelic experience, but certainly, their decisive experience and their evolving interpretation of it, was religious in the fullest sense demanded by these criteria. Their encounter was with the ambiguous, numinous grounds of their being. Further, it propelled them towards a sacred interpretation of the Cosmos in the face of their intellectual agnosticism and religious indifference. Out of this encounter they came to spend a major portion of their time under Stephen's guidance elaborating a sacred belief system that had a global capacity to integrate their lives into the ultimacy of the Cosmos. This produced not only a new understanding of themselves and of the universe, but also continuous efforts to transform their personal and corporate behavior into perfect alignment with their sacred vision. So far these changes have been for the core members in this community irreversible and comprehensive in their impact on all levels of their life-style. Stephen and his students have abandoned careers and education; they have entered into new sexual and family arrangements; they have changed their diets; they have simplified their material standards of living, and have withdrawn from the general social and economic activities of the American culture. This community is surely an example of sustained religious change based on the psychedelic experience.

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I also was able to observe and to document in their teachings and in their behavior a decline in their usage of psychedelic drugs. The short period of time of actual observations, from February through November of 1970, was a year of social transition and transformation, especially in the area of their drug usage. An inverse correlation between their drug usage and their religious development does appear to hold for this community. They are now making an attempt to justify legally a continuing usage of marihuana, but this appears marginal to their spiritual life in comparison to the group telepathic experience. Also, LSD, which was the critical drug experience for Stephen and most of his students, has been given up completely.

I focused my research and subsequent interpretation on the central mediating and transitional role of symbols in religious change. The sustained symbolic elaborations, based first on the drug experiences, later also on religious traditions and secular theories, and finally on their own behavioral changes, led them steadily towards religious community. This intense and continuous symbolic activity provided them with the means and the meaning for shifting the experiential center for their life together. Psychedelic drugs provided impetus, insight, and a common starting point in their quest. They gave them a common physiological and psychological experience of self-awareness in the world. Ironically, it was the application of a technological solution, a synthetic psychoactive chemical, to the ancient problematic character of the human situation. The resultant experience, however, propelled these young persons away from technical solutions and technological

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society toward social relations, religious questions, and behavioral choices directing them to the oldest means for resolving the basic issues of human living, religion.

In Chapter Two, I documented the reports of Stephen and the Monday Night Class about their individual psychedelic experiences as an encounter with the Holy. This was done so that sufficient evidence was cited for satisfying the demands of the first criterion of religious drug usage in this case. These data do not reveal adequately the specific dynamics of how various individuals came to label this experience religious. Therefore, an attempt on my part to explain the social means and symbolic forms for this initial phase of their development is premature at this point. Later in the general analysis of American society I shall offer some suggestions about cultural and social sources which might plausibly have been factors in encouraging young Americans in the 1960s to use psychedelic drugs and for some of them to interpret this in a religious manner. Stephen and members of the Monday Night Class probably came to their utilization of these drugs in their specific ways out of these general social conditions.

The other two phases, from encounter to myth, and from myth to communal ethos, were available for analysis in the case study. In this study I described the social contexts and specific occasions whereby this community pursued its path beyond drugs to religion. Each of these processes and phases transformed and incorporated the other symbolic forms of their life together to that point.

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They were socially constructing the myth moment in those verbal interactions where they harnessed the newly released biological energies from psychedelic drugs to the task of elaborating a symbol system capable of an ultimate interpretation of their situation. The major social means for this important work was the Monday Night Class meeting. This was the early and sustained creation where Stephen and his students explored their experience on drugs and sought to shape symbols faithful to what they had seen. Some of the smaller group meetings with a few core students and their families, and the regular Sunday Service may have also played a subsidiary role in this process, but as the Monday Night Class grew larger the drama of each evening added authority to Stephen's teachings. It was there he had to address the public with his teachings. There he had to answer anyone's challenge to his interpretations. The growing size and regular attendance of his core students were self-fulfilling proofs to them and to him of the merit of the symbol system they were developing together. It was there over four years time that Stephen learned to speak ex cathedra.

The interactional "motor" which gave dynamism to this process was the question-and-answer form that Stephen evolved. This dialogical format was the means by which the most intimate personal matters and the most general cosmic things were brought together with increasing metaphorical power and coherence in their emerging sacred symbol system. Stephen's skill at controlling the definition of the situation within this process allowed even challenges and disagreements to yield up their social energies to the larger symbolic

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consensus.

The sacred symbol system was the creation of the myth phase and continued to be elaborated throughout the time I was with them. My observations convinced me that in the main, however, they were well within the development of their communal ethos during this period. Certainly, by the time the Caravan had completed its journey to the Farm, their major energies and the social sources for their authority had shifted away from primary dependence on the drug experience to their social experience and relationships as a community.

In the ethos moment they used the new energies released in their psychedelic experiences, effectively channelled and interpreted by their sacred symbol system, to transform their social behavior. As they experimented with new behaviors these were also subjects for discussion in the Monday Night Class. In these discussions careful evaluations of the spiritual implications of various behaviors were made. Under Stephen's guidance and interpretation, a certain direction in their behavioral experimentation began to emerge, until finally a patterning of their whole life-style took shape.

Stephen's own Family became the social model and the social means for the transition from their mythic vision to the social reality of everyday behavior. They were his earnest of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of his sacred vision for the reconstruction of a human life-style that was spiritually "straight." The dynamism for this interaction came from the rich specificity of the model and their availability for continuous social relatedness. All members of the Family lived the vision and desired to share it with the individual students. They talked to you of their

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changes; they listened to your problems; they suggested changes you could try; they advised, counseled, and helped all who asked. They were re-doing the behavioral basics for being a human being. You could try it yourself and see it work.

The overall direction was withdrawal from damaging contact with the ordinary middle-class American life-style and a positive simplification of the material culture in their own living. In so doing the Family was discovering and reporting to others the many good energy sources for "getting straight" and "staying high." These were energy sources that arose naturally out of new social relationships, freed now of bad behavioral patterns that wasted life's energies.

The consolidation of the ethos phase of their development is found in Stephen's emergence as the charismatic authority, the Holy Man. If the Family provided them with the means for creating the behavioral basics that created their specific communal ethos, then it was Stephen as the Holy Man who played for them the legitimating role for this ethos. I am convinced the interactional dynamism in this symbolic form arises in its depths from his ability to lead them away from their dependence on psychedelic drugs as the ground for their sacred symbol system. He offered himself or accepted from them the role of Holy Man. He took on the task of providing them with an alternate experiential grounding within their own lives as a community. In so doing the final steps were taken for rooting their experience in the social relationships they were constructing together, beyond drugs, beyond words, but in Stephen.

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There were three distinctive social means by which this symbolic form, the Holy Man, was created: the student-teacher relationship, the meeting of the challenges of the outsiders, and the evolution of his teachings about the psychedelic experience. In the first, the student-teacher relationship, Stephen's advice to individual students became specific and demanding. In this interaction the students were drawn even closer to Stephen's sacred vision for now it was rooted in the intimate details of their own personal struggle to change.

In the second, the challenge of religious and secular outsiders, Stephen faced the task of embodying himself as a religious teacher in the face of criticism and conflict. He had to stand up for his vision without seeming to lose his compassion for those with whom he disagreed. I was able to observe him in confrontations with police, political revolutionaries, and other Holy Men. In all of these challenges he usually achieved an agreement with them, even if it was to disagree with respect for each other. The subtle and sophisticated encounters with the other Holy Men were the maximum test cases.

In the third social means, the changing of his teachings about drugs and his own drug usage, the internal challenge to his emergence as a charismatic authority on his own was played out in numerous interactions with his students and the outsiders. Psychedelic drugs had been his path. He was known as a teacher because of his authoritative usage and interpretation of this experience. In these changes of thought and behavior he was slowly and carefully disengaging his personal charismatic authority from the drug charisma

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of his spiritual rebirth. Now he could stay high and get more spiritual work done without LSD. At this same time, Stephen began to sense that he could speak the truth infallibly when he was leading a meeting. This ability rested not in the psychedelic experience but in the achievement of agreement at the telepathic level of the community's group-mind. In this teaching the long path had been traversed. Stephen was recognized as the Holy Man, spiritual leader of this community, and capable of speaking the infallible truth when enfolded within the telepathic community.

In this ethos phase of their development, the Monday Night Class had moved from one point of certain contact with the Holy in their common psychedelic experience to the discovery of many social sources in their own lives for spiritual energy. Stephen's charismatic authority could continue to confirm their vision and their living in an encounter with the Holy. They had found their life, a sacred symbolic life, rooted now in their own community's ethos as interpreted and mediated to them by Stephen, the psychedelic Holy Man.

In this way the theoretical model, developed from an analysis of the historical, ethnobotanical, and anthropological studies surveyed in Chapter One, has been useful for analyzing this community's usage of psychedelic experience in their social construction of a religion. In using it I have clarified the social means used and the symbolic forms created at each phase in their social development. In the specific prediction that there would be a declining usage of drugs as the community elaborated and expanded its sacred symbol system and its religious behavioral patterns, this perspective

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correctly guided my attention to the replacement of the biological sources for the Holy encounter with social sources. It suggests, on the basis of this case study, a plausible reason for the fact that no major trans-national religious tradition today uses any of these substances in a central religious manner, despite the fact that psychoactive drugs are available worldwide and have been associated in the past with religions.

A helpful sociological perspective for explaining the importance of this shift from random encounters with non-ordinary reality to the sustaining ethos of social interactions with a religious community, is found in Neil Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior. The ideal-type model which I have used thus far to analyze this new religious movement is an analytic description of their internal social dialectic - i.e. how they socially constructed this new religious reality among themselves. Smelser's theoretical perspective allows for a more general analytic description of this same process. It provides a retrospective means for explaining the external social dialectic of their successful emergence from the general psychedelic drug movement of the late 1960s in the U.S.A. How it was that through their religious belief-system they changed illegal private drug usage into a collective social movement.

Smelser uses a "value-added" step-by-step rocess for demonstrating the social structures created for enabling a group of actors to move from random episodes of collective behavior experiences to construct a viable social movement. Drawing upon Talcott Parson's system of four major structural realities in any social system, i.e. Values (overall purposes or goals), Norms (rules for achieving the

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goals), mobilization of motives (social roles for individuals and groups), and situational facilities (specific social, cultural, or institutional resources), he specifies structural conditions for phases by which collective behavior episodes are created and can then become one of five possible types of social actions.[1] This value-added process is analyzed at four increasingly deterministic levels of social action, they are:

1) structural conduciveness, i.e. general social and cultural resources or conditions that permit the possibility of episodes of collective behavior;

2) strain i.e. more specific dislocations within a given social situation that is perceived as a problem;

3) the crstalization of a generalized belief i.e. a reformulation of the problem in terms of a more general social component so that resources and actions can be generated that it is believed will directly remove the strain; and

4) mobilization for action and the responses of social control agencies, i.e. specific activity begun based on this new generalized belief and the particular social sanctions this activity elicits this theoretical formulation leads. Smelser to see the type of generalized belief being acted upon as the key for defining the social outcomes.[2] As he says of this generalized belief:

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[1] Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, 24-28.

[2] Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, 383-384.

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"It compresses several levels of the components of action into a single belief, from which specific operative solutions are expected to flow. An episode of collective behavior itself occurs when people are mobilized for action on the basis of such a belief."[1] This analytic focus on the significance of a generalized belief suggests the power of a symbol for reconstructing social behavior. This perspective is congruent especially with the self-perception of religious actors in their social movements. This theoretical insight lead him to formally define collective behavior as:

"An uninstitutionalized mobilization for action in order to modify one or more kinds of strain on the basis of a generalized reconstruction of a component of action."[2]

Of the five types of collective behaviors he identifies in this manner, Stephen and the Monday Night Class could be described as an example of the most general, i.e. the value-oriented movement. Their use of psychedelic drug experience for overcoming the everyday definitions of social reality is an example of the uninstitutionalized activity in a most basic form of randomizing experience of the social world by directly altering your psychological reality. They used this experience in a collective manner beyond their private experience both in their drug-using within small groups and also in the larger class meetings where continual re-interpretation of their private experience produced communal unanimity about the nature and

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[1] Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, 71.

[2] Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, 71.

significance of their personal drug experiences. In their creation of a generalized belief they chose the language and generality of religion which define their problem at the value-level of social action and its solution as religious activity for overcoming their personal loss of meaningful living. "Spirit is Real" became the generalized belief for re-ordering their total lives so that this deficit of meaning experienced in their ordinary living gave way to the social construction of a religious life in a community which shared a consensus about the "really real" revealed to them via the psychedelic encounters. It was an experience that gave them access to a reformulation of their problem and initial energy for the social reconstruction of their lives. In this way their usage can be seen as an example of "collective behavior" as Smelser defines it.

Then what are the specific features in this case of Smelser's four analytical phases by which Stephen and Monday Night Class successfully determined their transformation of episodes of collective behavior using these drugs, as a value-oriented movement into a religious community?

1. Structural Conduciveness:

The San Francisco Bay region during the 1960s was the center of experimentation with psychedelic drugs. Some of the visible national leaders of this experimentation, such as Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, were proposing a religious interpretation of these experiences, and a religious mode of behavior as the way to reconstruct your living. By 1968 more political modes of rapid social change became ineffective as a value-oriented movement because of

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their containment by aggressive social control agencies within the universities, political parties, and in the urban centers of America. San Francisco was also the haven of the bohemian culture of 1950s, the Beatniks, the immediate center of the hippie movement; it was a tolerant city where illicit drug usage and deviant sexual and social behaviors were a part of the city's generally accepted social life. Many new and socially unconventional religious groups were common in this area. Also a large and established minority of persons interested in Eastern religions and spirituality could be found here. These then were the specific social features that permitted an emergence of a new religious group using psychedelic drugs in this area at this time.

2. Strain:

There was no institutionalized means of experiential authority that could provide continual validation of radical forms of personal transformation and social change which many of the young and adult intellectuals sought in the face of the political and social violence and chaos of the 1960s, e.g. Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the anti-Vietnam War and Fraft Resistance movements, the S.D.S., Berkeley Free Speech and other university-related rebellions, and the urban riots. As political protest movements proved ineffective means of satisfying these needs for fundamental and experiential sources of values, a search for non-ordinary experience socially transparent to the vissitudes of everyday life became a general social source of strain at the value-level of social action for many. The psychedelic experience spread rapidly to meet this value-oriented

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need while other persons sought many hedonistic escapes through these drug experiences, or turned to other drugs, e.g. heroin and amphetamines, for relief of their personal sense of impotence. Stephen and the Monday Night Class members were a part of those who used psychedelic experience to make sense of their lives in a value-oriented movement.

3. The crystalization of a generalized belief:

Stephen as a teacher provided the Monday Night Class members with a religious vision to channel their psychedelic experiences into immediate reconstruction of their lives. Their sense of value strain was directly overcome by his overarching interpretation of the behavioral details of their living and feeling as connected to the essential living and feeling of the Cosmos itself. This crystalization of a generalized belief was found in the simple affirmation that they were in touch with this ultimate aliveness of reality in the drug experience itself, i.e. "Spirit is Real".

4. Mobilization of roles and response of social control agencies:

From this generalized belief about the correct interpretation of the drug experience, and its correct usage as the experiential source for social authority flowed a sense of social creations, each steadily contributing to moving from isolated individual or small-group episodes of collective behavior to a value-oriented movement. There was the social creation of the "Class" meetings, the traveling "Caravan" of buses, and the establishment of their "Farm" community. This process led them beyond the drug experience itself to their social experience as a religious community, manifested in Stephen's

emergence as their source for necessary experiential authority, "The Holy Man". Stephen and the Monday Night Class faced the specific challenges of social control authorities both legal and religious. In each case Stephen successfully reached a working agreement with these authorities that permitted the continuing development of their social movement as a religious community. Through these and also internal questions about drug behavior with the Monday Night Class, Stephen carefully disengaged his personal charisma from drug usage. This led to a more marginal role for the drug experience within their communal spiritual quest and also gained them the tolerance and even respect of these social control agents.

In moving through these four transitions Stephen led his community in the reconstruction of their lives by use of the collective behavior experiences of the psychedelic drug experience. As Smelser suggests in a value-oriented movement such as this, successful achievement of such a movement requires change from the most general value-level down to the behavioral details of everyday life. All four of the social action components, values, norms, mobilization of motives, and situational facilities of this groups' social life were transformed in detail as Stephen continually and thoroughly applied the drug experience as a religious touchstone for transforming their personal and social lives. They created an eclectic religious symbol system as their value structure; they reordered the norms of their everyday behavior by coming together in a religious community with increasing face-to-face continuity from the Class, to the Caravan, to the Farm; they created new or altered social roles such as the four-way group marriage for sexual models, the primacy

of the student-teacher religious relationship as the form of authority; and they redid the basics of everyday life in strict vegetarian diets, subsistency farming, living in school buses, traveling across the U.S.A. in caravan ; all these actions contributed to the emergence of the value-oriented movement for transforming of self and of society which their psychedelic experiences had suggested. Stephen's choice of a religious interpretation and mode of communal behavior successfully led them in the social structural determination of their lives much as Smelser's model implies is necessary to achieve completely the desired change.

Analysis of the Social Sources for Religious Drug Usage

Turning back to the difficult question of why these young middle-class American chose to use psychedelic substances during the 1960s, I wish to follow up some suggestions in Chapter One about social situations in which groups might use these substances for energy to overcome negative symbolic definitions of themselves. In this discussion I am searching for some plausible social sources in United States society and culture which would help explain why Stephen and the Monday Night Class chose to use this psychedelic experience to construct a religious community. In this broader cultural analysis I find it possible to construct a reasonable account for the encounter phase of this community. First, what factors in the general social situation of contemporary American society may have stimulated many young persons to use psychedelic drugs? Second, what social factors and cultural resources were available to young persons which they could use for constructing a new religious community based on psychedelic experience?

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The General Pattern of Drug Misuse

Henry Lennard and his associates in Mystification and Drug Misuse[1] present a sociological analysis of drug misuse which sets this problem within the larger social patterns of drug usage in the United States. Americans use a vast array of mood altering substances as regular means for self-regulation and social control of problem people. In this general pattern they would include the caffeine in our cokes or coffee, alcoholic beverages, aspirin, prescription sedatives, tranquilizers, and illegal substances, such as LSD or heroin. They contend convincingly that illicit, illegal and deviant drug usage can only be understood as part of this larger general pattern. We are a technological civilization. We are used to discovering and rapidly exploiting new techniques for solving definable problems. Psychoactive drugs are being developed and used by us to meet behavioral problems with a chemical solution. As with techniques in general, it is a rapid process of intervention of a source of energy which achieves the goal desired, short-cutting or by-passing steps seen as inefficient or unnecessary to the achievement of the goal. It is their view that behavioral problems are in essence social problems. Psychoactive substances, whether social, medical, or illicit, are all subject to misuse if used in

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[1]Henry L. Lennard, et.al., Mystification and Drug Misuse: Hazards in Using Psychoactive Drugs (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

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such a way that the social situation producing the behavioral problem is not altered in a direction that facilitates increased human interaction and the learning of interpersonal skills for achieving the desired goal within a social process. They explore the widespread problems of misuse in our society of these substances, and they recommend revision of social, educational and medical policies surrounding their use which would begin to take seriously the societal consequences and the social changes necessary to overcome the interactional deficits in major institutional situations that stimulate drug usage as a technical solution.

Present patterns of usage, they believe, will only further the general erosion of social settings and human relationships that would allow persons to learn the necessary social ways of achieving goals and psychological effects that naturally arise from learning how to be human through enriched and challenging human relatedness. Here they connect with a major analytic theme developed in the sociological tradition. Generations of sociologists have tried to understand the "loss of human community" that technological society with its rapid industrialization and urbanization has been producing.[1] Lennard et.al. are approaching the understanding of psychoactive drug usage from this larger analytical perspective of the loss of a sense of community among persons in the industrial West.

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[1] Robert Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition (New York: Basic Books, 1966) 47-106. For a critical view of this concern see, Alvin W. Gouldner, The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 412-446. Maurice R. Stein, The Eclipse of Community (New York: Harper and Row Torchbooks, 1964).

Borrowing an idea from Marshall McLuhan, they characterize the social problem that such a technical approach to psychoactive drug use may be presently producing in our society.[1] McLuhan asserts that media tend to atrophy or amputate the functions they extend. Lennard believes this may be the case with these drugs, too.

> An important possibility is that the long-term use of psychoactive drugs of all kinds results in having the self-regulating function of the body amputated. Though amputation is perhaps too strong a term, in many persons a definite modification in this self-regulatory mechanism occurs.[2]

At the level of social interaction such amputations or impairment could reduce group functioning also.

> Drugs may well amputate or atrophy a group's ability to make provisions for and to develop strategies of human relatedness in response to particular psychological reactions among its members, such as anxiety, grief, rage, or other extreme forms of behavior.[3]

Given the general cultural tendency in our technological society to move in this direction, such an impairment in social interaction would only further the sense of loss of community.

This increasing tendency to solve behavioral problems with improved drug technique only reduces social learning through human interaction for meeting our human crises. This removes from human actors again trust in their own personal abilities and resources for meeting their problems. As Lennard explains it, "The regulatory

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[1] McLuhan, Understanding Media.

[2] Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 72.

[3] Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 73.

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function is thus increasingly delegated to drugs, not to the significant parties in the interpersonal environment."[1] Thus, our society with its technological approach encourages the drug user to settle for the drug effect itself rather than to struggle through social learning to produce the effect directly as a result of human relatedness. The mystification of their book's title is their term for the unseen irony that the usage of psychoactive drugs often results in the erosion of the very qualities of relatedness and experience for which they were taken. From their sociological analysis, correct understanding can be gained only by viewing drug usage and misuse within a complex interlocking system that includes the drug industry, the medical profession, the mass media and the users. Institutional changes affecting these interrelationships would be necessary to create new social relationships that would lower the real occurrence of drug misuse. In summary, it is a deeply-rooted and culturally pervasive problem of loss of basic human relatedness in American society.

To fully appreciate the forcefulness of this analysis in trying to explain the usage of psychedelic drugs among the young, it is necessary to appreciate the significance of social interaction for human beings. This is another major theme in the sociological tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lennard points to the crucial role this interaction plays in normal human development, i.e. socialization.

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[1] Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 74.

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> Human beings are characterized by their strivings for and dependence upon interaction with other human beings. Such interaction is an end in itself, and interactional deprivation leads to anguish, loneliness, and depression. Interaction defines and affirms the humanness of the self. One acquires identity by being socially recognized and responded to by another person. Interaction defines and redefines the self and the social roles of interactors and authenticates the identity assumed by an individual vis-a-vis other persons.[1]

"An end in itself" is the central element empowering this perspective on human relations. In this phrase is the assertion that some matters of being human, some of the most basic matters, are achieved only through face-to-face direct human relating. All attempts to substitute or to define the self abstractly through other processes lead to diminished social functioning of human beings.

> The outward form can be and is imitated, but one cannot learn through such limited interaction how to think, feel, and relate to others in reciprocal roles; these can be learned only through participation in the process of interaction itself, through practice with a variety of different role partners. . . . Interacting with each provides increments of knowledge about and experience with human relationships.[2]

Learning through the "interactional dance " is the key to creating the necessary inner experience of humanness.[3] It is this social process that technology may short-change and psychoactive drugs short circuit.

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[1]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 48-49.

[2]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 51.

[3]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 50.

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Lennard's interpretation of our cultural situation then is one of minimal or confused opportunities for this fundamental form of human learning. This is especially difficult for the young who are defining self-identities for their initial adult roles. Psychoactive substances may be used by them to alter their behavior and perception in the interactional process to achieve effects associated with adult roles, but in the process, they fail to learn the interpersonal skills for achieving such effects on their own.

> Modern society, especially American society, although technologically advanced, is interactionally barren, devoid of drama and ritual, of magic and mystery. The individual is overwhelmed with informational inputs, such as television, radio, motion pictures, newspapers, which distance him further and further from personal experience with other human beings.[1]

For the young adult the loss of interactional rituals of dramatic size and religious intensity is a deficit in their experience which is difficult to overcome or to tolerate. Psychedelic experience could be one way they try to overcome this deficit.

A problem Lennard sees specifically in psychedelic drugs is the channeling of the individual's interactions by his increased awareness of the sensory modalities. This shifts the normal balances among the sensory modalities so that they may be relied upon exclusively to the neglect of other modalities of human relating. Initially this will facilitate social interaction among users of similar psychoactive substances, e.g. a cocktail party. There is a closer, if stereotyped, psychological attunement among persons

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[1] Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 51.

using similar drugs. They may interpret this as greater social intimacy, warmth, and understanding of each other.

Based on their general perspective on the significance of fully normal human social interaction with richness of inner experience, Lennard concludes that dependence on psychoactive drugs truncates these fundamental interactional experiences in a cultural situation already deficient in opportunities for their occurrence. Drug facilitated interaction is often pseudo-interaction in their view. They say,

> Authentic human interaction requires sensitivity to other persons, recognition of boundaries, and, probably most significantly, phase differentiation. That is to say, the interactional process is progressive. It changes its character and the character of the participants over time.[1]

Drug facilitated interaction then may impede the social learning necessary for human beings to adapt comfortably and creatively to stress and to imagine new forms of living, indeed to engage in the basic phenomena of social change itself.

Lennard relates this last tendency to a larger cultural trend encouraged in a technological society. Any deviance and difference are considered stressful; these impede the flow of technological process and productivity; they are devalued, while individuals who can conform with precisely timed schedules are highly regarded. So much psychoactive drug usage seems to support this tendency toward "coolness," even the illegal drugs often used in protest. "Drugs are tools that are introduced into the human 'machines' to make

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[1]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 56.

them better and to make them run smoothly."[1] Here the technological process comes full circle as human beings are products as well as producers.

At one point in their analysis they discuss another aspect of psychoactive experience that suggests a connection between psychedelics and religion. In the short run, these drug assist humans in producing and in considering alternate modes for experiencing the world. This could be an effective respite from the ordinary social definition of a situation. They conclude,

> These benefits of drugs rest to a considerable extent upon the kinds of figure-ground reversals they help to generate, that is, upon the changes in perception of what is important and what is relevant.[2]

Religious psychedelic drug users would rate this effect very highly, since they may be specifically trying to escape what they find as an anomic or negative situational definition. Also, the way they state this particular effect sounds like one possible way to describe what is a traditional religious activity, questioning the foundations of your culture.

They conclude that psychoactive drugs too often are used in our society as substitutes for human relatedness and experience. They plead for new social relations within American institutions that can generate rich and varied inner experiences, especially for the young. Schools should be settings where young persons, over-

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[1]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 116.

[2]Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 111.

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loaded with information, can find "interactional mentors and guides."[1] Otherwise young people, driven by the barrenness of their interactional situation, will continue to use drugs to achieve these effects. But then there is no human learning. Communes of young persons are at least moving in the right direction for establishing human relatedness. Technological society, obsessed with its calculus for goal achievement, stimulates and promotes drug dependency, and provides few situations for learning the meaning of human substantive interaction. Such deficiency can only be corrected by major social changes in the relationship between technological productivity and human relatedness.

Lennard and his associates make a plausible sociological case that this society creates a situational definition that is symbolically deprived for many of its young. Meaninglessness is their lot in life. They have few social settings rich enough in content and interaction to learn how to become a human being. The use of psychedelic drugs, with its dramatic and direct alternations in subjective self-awareness, is one means by which some of them overcame this sense of deprivation. Ironically, it was the kind of solution to a behavioral problem proposed in general by our technological society. In that sense, they chose a natural solution to their problem, different in degree only from their parents' usage of coffee, alcoholic beverages or tranquilizers. The dramatic intensity of the effect and the alternations in their behavior, how-

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[1] Lennard, Mystification and Drug Misuse, 117.

ever, were not acceptable. Either they developed patterns of repetitive dependency which led to confusion in their behavior and trouble with legal or medical authorities, or, they proposed life-style changes that did not fit the larger social expectations. Technological society could not tolerate nor sanction either of these for long. These drugs were made illegal and the young people were driven underground.

Stephen and his Monday Night Class fit the general specifications of this analysis rather well. In their choice of a religious model for their development they found their own way for shifting their energies towards more human relating. They discovered in the psychedelic experience a means for taking their moratorium from ordinary reality which was deprived and deficient in its human drama. They substituted the psychedelic experience for that social reality, and in so doing, reversed the figure-ground of the technological culture. This gave them cultural mobility for re-defining their human identities. Stephen served as a teacher who was an "interactional mentor and guide," to use Lennard's phrase. The class meeting gave them a place to interact in a dramatic way that created new symbolic forms for them. The religious interpretation of their psychedelic experience led them, slowly but surely, from mere repetitive usage of these substances. Religious traditions provided them with other larger than life models, heroes, and communities for their imitation. In encouraging them to turn from the material world to concentrate on their spiritual development, Stephen assisted their withdrawal from technical routines and goals

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which had trapped them in meaningless social roles. Now they had lots of time to work on the fundamental interactional skills they needed. They could return human meaningfulness to their own lives and activities. A religious interpretation focuses on creating and learning how to live just as humans, the symbol-making creatures par excellence. As their religion and their community developed, new skills and social sources for their encounter with the sacred flourished. Psychedelic experience released them from the old world, but the work of their own hands, minds, and bodies built their new one.

Lennard's perspective provides a sociological explanation of the dynamics relevant to my prediction that as a community developed a religion it would minimize its drug usage. The religious interpretation of the psychedelic experience both enriched and restrained its usage. Under Stephen's leadership, the community shifted, in line with Lennard's analysis, from achieving a desired effect with drugs to learning how to achieve the effect through dramatic social interaction. Initially the religious interpretation provided them with the resources for grasping the psychedelic experience as an answer to their felt deprivation of human substance in this technological society. Religious traditions could be cited for explaining their crisis as the loss of human relatedness, the loss of real human community, indeed cosmic community with God. The religious interpretation of drug experience validated their desire to take a dramatic converting risk to meet their sense of crisis. It provided them with an overarching dramatic script and large-scale stage

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upon which to act out their personal quest for renewed life. They were free to invent out of their own imaginative resources and experiences a new version of the religious story.

Stephen related their drug experiences to the spiritual experiences of Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, etc. This provided them with enlarged significance, role models, and cautionary restraints against dependence on drugs. These stories became resources for evaluating their drug experiences and their human relationships. They wished to express their new vision in relation to these other great religious teachers and traditions. This directed their newly released energies and time to the task of character reformation and the reordering of their social lives. The religious interpretation shifted the concern from just having and explaining drug experiences to working on better human relationships. Finally, Stephen led them toward their own community. This took considerable dramatic risk and effort on their part, especially in the Caravan's travels. New stories of equal value and validity emerged from these social experiences for religious interpretation, even as their drug experience faded in frequency and intensity. The inverse correlation between drugs and religion arises out of the successful utilization of these substances to meet the felt deprivation of the technological community. At its most complete the religious interpretation produces a new community, full of social sources of the sacred experience, beyond LSD, beyond words, at home in the Spirit realized in group telepathy.

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Anomie in Higher Education

The general analysis of the loss of a sense of community in a technological society can plausibly be applied to the specific social setting from which many of the young users came, that is higher education. From contrasting radical and conservative perspectives, Michael W. Miles and Robert Nisbet respectively, have reached similar insights concerning the social sources of the student rebellions during the 1960s.[1] They agree that the internal changes in the university since World War Two created a social situation of strain and confusion which elicited the students' turmoil. Nisbet traces the rise of "higher capitalism," where faculty are oriented toward economic gain through research and direct links to government and business communities. In his analysis, this led to the "degradation of the academic dogma," the erosion of the internal authority of the community of scholars. Miles cites similar economic developments. Further he reasons that the huge increase in student populations at major university centers added to the strain. Both agree that new forms of business-oriented management practices and procedures, emphasizing maximization of return on investment, changed the university into the "multiversity" for sale to the highest private or public bidder. Univer-

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[1]Michael W. Miles, The Radical Probe: the Logic of Student Rebellion (New York: Atheneum, 1971); Robert Nisbet, The Degradation of the Academic Dogma: the University in America, 1945-1970 (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

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sities became "knowledge factories" in their goals and in their treatment of internal social relations among students and faculty. In effect, the Industrial Revolution finally caught up with the last remaining medieval aristocracy, and the students in Protestant rebellions followed close behind.

If Lennard's general analysis about the effect of technological society on social relations is correct, then it is plausible that industrialization of higher educational communities since World War Two would be a specific social source for psychedelic drug usage among the young. Stephen certainly taught a similar characterization of higher education and its impact upon students. This had been the particular social setting from which Stephen and many of the members of the Monday Night Class had fled. It is noteworthy, however, that the social setting and roles of central significance in this community's development were a class and a teacher with students. Obviously, they felt that this was the particular social relationship technological society had failed to provide them. Nisbet and Miles in their analyses comment on the erosion of authority and the structures of community. Stephen was directly critical of the universities for their teaching of the relativity of truth. This was why even though he and his students had mostly studied the humanities and the social sciences, they were scornful of the failure of their teachers to give them any really useful information about what it meant to live. Turning from the university with its meaningless knowledge and industrialized social relationships empty of real human content, they chose to risk the interior journey of

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the psychedelic experience. With it they sought to construct their own ways to teach and to learn what it was to be a human. It became their task to create their own sacred symbol system capable of defining a meaningful symbolic form of human life over against the technical intellectualism of the multi-versity.

It is possible to see from these social analyses of the technological society and the multi-versity why many young persons sought relief from this interactional barrenness in psychedelic drug experience. Also, there is evidence here for understanding why such a quest became religious for some of them. Religion is certainly one of the oldest ways human beings have directly tried to construct symbols for situating themselves meaningfully in the cosmos and in a community. Furthermore, other social and cultural factors can be adduced for explaining why this quest for meaning was able to become a specific search for encountering the Holy.

The Quest for Human Content

The religious interpretation of the psychedelic experience can plausibly be rooted in the psychological response that a person in a technological society would have when ingesting psychoactive chemicals. In Chapter One, I presented Anthony F. C. Wallace's early study of the cultural determinants of personal response to hallucinogenic experience.[1] He concluded that persons in the medical

[1]Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Cultural Determinants of Response to Hallucinatory Experience."

settings of a technological society would primarily fasten their interpretation on "the means" for producing this effect. In contrast pre-literate users drew their interpretation from "the content" given to them in the hallucinogenic encounter. In his theory Wallace described the characteristic reactions of persons who were "at home" in their respective cultural environments.

For the person "at home" in technological society, there is no need for "content." The psychedelic experience is recognized and is labeled an "hallucination." There could be a fascination with how drugs alter your "normal" sense of "reality." Such alternations might be useful for solving some behavioral problems as other psychoactive drugs have been. Technological society, following Lennard's analysis, would encourage separation of inner experience from behavioral contexts for those "at home" with such distances between "subjective" and "objective" realities. What if the psychedelic subject were confused or disturbed by the dominant cultural environment? What if he or she were "lost" in social relationships that demanded precise performances of complex social roles but failed to provide social interactions for generating meaningful inner experiences for "making sense" of the situation?

If Lennard, Miles, and Nisbet are correct in their general sociological analysis of American society, then this condition of social "lostness" prevails for many young Americans today. In many ways this was the testimony of Stephen and the Monday Night Class. In my earlier discussion in Chapter One of the three situations where evidence existed of an association between drugs and religion,

I suggested that all three were characterized by a general quest for cultural meaning. Drugs were used as part of a general quest for human content. In the early phases of ancient agricultural civilizations and among surviving pre-literate tribal peoples, one could assume that this usage fits the general cultural norms concerning the spiritual world. These then are "at home" usages of psychedelic drugs for the elaboration and integration of self and a sacred symbol system. The other situation of religious usage of these drugs was in nativistic rebellions where a native people had experienced loss or disorganization of their cultures from invasion by cultural outsiders.

In this third situation the balance between their inner experience and their outside social world was disrupted. Often the initial response in this situation was to fight to restore the outside social world to its native cultural integrity. When this failed, disorganization fell upon their outside social world. To restore a humanly meaningful world they turned to their inner experience. There they might discover an explanation for their situation and new symbolic forms for living. These new symbolic forms could give them the social means for learning how to affect the outside world so that it would be "owned" by them again. Psychedelic experience could be a tool for enlarging the self's insight and power through release of the fantasizing mechanism of the human brain. With these new symbolic forms, a people might stabilize the transaction between their inner experience and the outside social world, in order that a meaningful interactional dance would begin again.

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Many young Americans found themselves "lost" in the social wilderness of technological society. Some of them experienced this loss at such a deep level that psychedelic drugs were used for the religious task of rebuilding a meaningful symbolic world. They gave them a means for social withdrawal into the interior resources of the biological self-awareness, where fundamental symbolic alternatives could be imagined. Drugs furnished some of them with the initial energy to begin the shared social construction of new symbolic forms for living. The high-energy psychedelics, such as LSD, gave them individual subjective experiences of such size and scope that they filled the vacuum of affect created in technological society with unmediated sensory and emotional stimuli. This flew in the face of the technological society's partial norms and relativistic solipsism. Everyday life in American society supplied little intense dramatic interactions for self-definition. For those living and learning in a multi-versity, technical reason and social relations dominated their environment. Psychedelic drugs suggested the rich symbolic life of religion as an alternate means for constructing a humanly meaningful world.

Perhaps many of them tried to use these substances in this manner. Only a few like Stephen and the Monday Night Class were successfully able to sustain this direction of cultural revitalization in creating together a new religious community. For these few, the psychedelic experience suspended the life of technical rationality for a while, and allowed them the delight of the symbolic

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creation of human being itself. To explore and to elaborate life in this way was to pursue the way of religion, and to experience it as the most human activity of all; it was human relatedness as an "end in itself;" it was the rediscovery of "content."

The American Religious Situation

American culture, despite its present development as a technological society, nevertheless, is not devoid of cultural resources for legitimating and supporting those psychedelic drug users who chose a religious way. The people who came to America saw this land as "the Promised Land" of Biblical tradition. This theme grew into "manifest destiny" and the challenge of "frontiers." It became a mythic vision rooted in the vast geography of this continent, a pillar of the American Civil Religion.[1] There are two ways in which this cultural theme could be seen in the development of the psychedelic drug movement of the 1960s.

First, after World War Two inner immigration, a rising birth rate, and continuing urban migration combined to produce a rapid change in population density of many metropolitan regions.[2] By 1960, Americans felt crowded. Historically, we had often dealt with social and religious conflict by advising people to move on. There was

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[1] Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew (revised ed.; New York: Anchor Books, 1960), 72-98; for a more positive sociological viewpoint see, Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," Daedalus (Winter, 1967), 1-21.

[2] Robin M. Williams, Jr. American Society: a Sociological Interpretation (second edition, revised; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 13-17.

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always another frontier region for them to settle and to do "it" their own way. But for the many crowded in the cities and the dependent suburbs, there was no place to go. The technological economy encouraged centralization of populations and intensification of impersonal activity. It should not be surprising then, that the young and some intellectuals, sensing the inroads of the technological process within university communities, should be the "pilot" group for exploring a new spatial frontier. Psychedelic experience was the door to inner space. Many of the young and the intellectuals deeply felt the social conflicts of urban society, and especially in the early 1960s, the horrors of racism. Some of them had struggled in the South on what appeared an intractable problem. Others were beginning to find their own schools oppressive because of the technological erosion of community and the rising power of centralized administrative decision making. During the 1960s many political, social, and intellectual strategies were used in trying to solve these social problems. For some persons, the attraction of the psychedelic experience was analogous to the traditional call to go to the frontier and to create a new community beyond these social ills.

In the early "evangelical" phase of the psychedelic drug movement this was the "gospel" of many of the new young and old converts like Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert at Harvard.[1]

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[1]Richard Alpert, Sidney Cohen, and Lawrence Schiller, LSD (New York: New American Library, 1966).

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"Turn on, Tune in, Drop out," was simply a call to a new frontier. The charge that such a movement was escapist surely must also have been the charge of those who stayed "home" in the "old country" to every generation of spatial pioneers who went to the frontier. Of course, it is true. They did wish to escape, but they, as pioneers of old, also wished to build a new human civilization.

A second more obvious usage of this motivating theme of the spatial frontier occurred later in the psychedelic drug movement. After the initial exuberant public phase, they found persecution and conflict in the cities. So many of them decided to move back to rural areas of America.[1] Stephen and the Monday Night Class stayed longer than most in San Francisco. In this migration, they are similar to earlier utopian movements in American history. In the evangelical phase there was the hope that everyone would "turn on." For some movements this does not happen, and frequently in America's history these groups have sought to return to a simpler life in some remote rural area. This means almost total disengagement from the technological society's cultural values and social roles. Stephen and his community in their religious interpretation of the psychedelic experience had prepared themselves to make this extreme disengagement by the time they had finished the Caravan. The changes in values, life-styles, and identities, all led to a

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[1] William Hedgepeth and Dennis Stock, The Alternative: Communal Life in America (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1970).

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desire to live in a new community of material simplicity, where symbolic activity could be the major focus of their human relationships. This they are working to achieve on the Farm in Tennessee.

Another major theme in the historical religious experience of the American people is the periodic occurrence of Spiritual Awakenings that sweep across the whole culture.[1] Americans expect this to happen, or at least it is always there as a possibility. The psychedelic drug movement fits this historical memory in some interesting ways.

One of the requirements for these revivals is that the basic religious experience be available to any and to all. This is the theme of egalitarianism in American religious life. Psychedelic drugs again fit this demand for mass religious enthusiasm. They were drugs that brought mystical experience to those who dared to ingest them. Mysticism had always been the preserve of the religious elite. It usually required long hours of prayer, fasting and other means of self-mortification in preparation for its occurrence. Now all it required was daring.

Revival movements also stressed large public meetings for expression of the newly discovered religious experience. In their early evangelical phase the psychedelic users gathered for mass meetings in the thousands and called them "human be-ins." You do

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[1] Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (revised ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1959), 464-468, 507-518.

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not have to do anything, just come and be! American society at different times and in different ways needs mass religious gatherings to overcome the individual's sense of loneliness. In the first Great Awakening in the eighteenth century, perhaps it was the immigrants' sense of loss and loneliness for the European or British homeland. In the frontier revivals of the Second Great Awakening during the nineteenth century, perhaps it was the settlers' loneliness in the face of the vast geographical wilderness they were trying to settle. Today, perhaps this loneliness arises out of the great technological urban society we have become where, as Phillip Slater has said, we are lost in "the pursuit of loneliness."[1] In any case, the psychedelic drug movement also found religious expression for itself in these mass meetings. Later in their withdrawal from the cities, they directly attacked the problem of social loneliness in the development of small intentional communities, called communes. Stephen and his community, as did others, stressed physical contact, closeness, and affectionate touching in their families and in their meetings. The psychedelic experience had put them in touch with the joy and the power of simple human contact as a source for their lives together.

Harvey Cox in a recent book has correlated the emergence of these periodic revival movements with great wars of American history.[2]

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[1]Phillip Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

[2]Harvey Cox, The Seduction of the Spirit (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

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He believes the Vietnam War may have had such an impact upon us. I would add to his general insight that it is specifically civil wars that are related to these religious outbursts. World War One or the Spanish-American War might be seen as resulting from religious movements but not as formative influences. Instead it was the American Revolutionary War, which after all was at least in part a civil war with the Tories and our ancestors in Britain, and the American Civil War, that were possible influences in the two great religious revivals.

Today, it is not only the Vietnam War but the earlier confrontations over Civil Rights that has produced a plausibly similar situation in the United States. Civil wars are characterized by the use of coercion to settle what is experienced as a family quarrel. They tear at the social fabric and cultural norms of a people. In our case today the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights struggle exacerbated, especially among the young and university intellectuals, their general sense of estrangement from the majority of American people. In their view most Americans supported intolerable and obvious injustices. The Civil Rights struggle and the Vietnam War actualized in a dramatic manner all their fears that American society was destructive and out to get them, too. What had been psychological violence against their personalities became physical violence against their bodies. Stephen and his community spoke consistently against violence. It was why they rejected the political revolutionaries and emphasized their own religious way as the true revolution. It was also why they withdrew from cooperation with the larger society

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as much as possible, for they hoped it would collapse from its own violence.

The churches and the synagogues of America in a negative way also became a social source that may have indirectly permitted a religious usage of these drugs. Our dominant religious institutions in this society have been altered by the emergence and intensification of technological rationality in the United States. Some would argue that this is a long-term trend beginning with the Industrial Revolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] Since World War Two, following the social changes already characterized above in this discussion, religious institutions also felt the impact of technical rationality. Several sociologists have debated the precise reasons for this and the actual effects on religious behavior around the theme of secularization.[2] Whatever the actual implications, all agree that there has been significant change in the institutional ways in which religion functions in this society. This application of technical rationality to religious behavior produced a decline in direct human relating, too. Symbolic activities have

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[1]Thomas Luckmann, The Invisible Religion: the Problem of Religion in Modern Society (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

[2]Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967); Berger argues that secularization means the decline in cultural influence of religious institutions. Andrew M. Greeley, The Denominational Society: a Sociological Approach to Religion in America (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Forman and Company, 1972); Greeley disagrees with Berger, and argues that religious pluralism is only a change in social forms, not influence.

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become residual here as in the university, while organizational goals and achievements tend to dominate. In so doing, these religious institutions have achieved greater attunement or social relevance to the other institutions in American society. But this has created in religious institutions the same interactional barrenness that Lennard's analysis suggested for all our other social settings. In this the churches and the synagogues contributed to the impoverishment of cultural contexts in which the young might explore the symbolic foundations of their being. Stephen characterized Christianity in America as "run down." He said that until he understood Buddhism, he really didn't know what Christianity was at all.

In contrast their psychedelic experience was an all-embracing subjective encounter with the Holy. It demanded, not a functional religious response of partial norms, but rather a comprehensive change in their living. They became the new "pietists." In their communal experiment they returned to do over the behavioral basics of being a human. Every aspect of their lives was to be informed by their sacred vision. In their flight from the cities, and their choice of lives of material simplicity, they were creating their own version of monasticism with its emphasis upon "prayer and work." They would work to make their own economic subsistence so that they might be free to create sacred life.

Contemporary American religious institutions held little attraction for them. As was the case for pietists in the past these

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institutions seemed to them a sham and a mockery, parading religious symbols but unwilling to live them. They would create their own religious community borrowing from the religious traditions of all mankind. Eastern and esoteric traditions were more useful to them in their social construction of a religion of their own. The religious traditions of the West were institutionalized in such a rational manner that they did not provide a natural social context for those using psychedelic experience for renewing their symbolic vision. Perhaps if there had been a Buddhist Temple on every corner in America, Buddhism, too would have been less attractive for their usage.

Theodore Rozak recently argued in two books that industrialization in the West has brought a fundamental ambiguity to the nature and destiny of the human being.[1] This continuing oscillation at our cultural roots is between a technocratic vision and a romantic vision of the human. In many ways his argument supports Lennard's analysis of why so many young persons chose to use psychoactive drugs. Further, he believes that the various romantic renewal movements of the last several centuries have been fundamentally religious protests and renewal movements. Also, Max Weber in his analysis of the industrial West pointed to the conflict between what

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[1]Theodore Rozak, The Making of the Counter Culture (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969); and his Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Post-industrial Society (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972).

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he called "functional rationality" and "substantive rationality."[1] This conflict is over the relative allocation of time and energy a culture sanctions between the production of "things" and "humans," between "material" and "spiritual" culture.

Stephen and the Monday Night Class have taken their stand on the side of spiritual culture. They used their psychedelic experience to escape from technological America and to create a new religious definition of their lives. They illustrate the depth of the protest and the extent of transformation in life-style that many young persons found necessary to redress the balance in their lives between technical accomplishment and human relatedness. Perhaps they represent another attempt on the part of the American people to avoid losing their souls, while gaining the whole world.

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[1] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 77-158; for a brief discussion of Weber's "rationalization" see, Dennis Wrong, ed., Max Weber (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 25-32.

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Postscript: field research on Contemporary Religious Groups

Based on my research experience, I am aware of theoretical and empirical reasons why increased participant-observation studies of religious communities and movements could substantially improve the analysis of religious phenomena in U.S.A. First, it is an excellent training experience for the creation of disciplined and independent analysis of religious phenomena. Admittedly, there are initial problems in this approach. We do not have the cross-cultural distance that provides for a minimal personal objectivity which anthropologists have when visiting a new cultural setting, learning that new language, and therefore, an automatic restrain on one's cognitive bias. This last is very difficult to achieve in studying religious groups in one's own culture. For the academic American intellectual, even one trained in cross-cultural approaches to different religious traditions, most religious groups are a cognitive minority in fundamental dissonance with the social scientific or humanistic cognitive orientation of the university's department of religious studies. In my own experience, it took me several weeks of initial encounter with this group to restrain my impatience and my questioning attitude sufficiently to be able to listen and to observe them with cognitive and human empathy. My initial reaction was boredom, restlessness, emotional unease, and intellectual distaste. In the performing arts there is a critical theory that describes the necessary attitude for basic human empathy at the symbollic level of reality, i.e. "the willing suspension of disbelief". This is a form of personal risktaking that should be a training objective for scholars of religion. It is necessary

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but not sufficient for me to obtain procedural or methodological objectivity, for the object in religious studies is found at the symbollic level of human activity. Participant-observation is a disturbing and an effective means for learning the "arts" of dis-belief, sufficient for realistic and persuasive analytic descriptions of religious behavior in one's own culture.

My training because of its focus on the many religious traditions of human kind was not sufficiently rich or practiced in the development of these research skills. Such exposure to the multi-cultural religious reality of these traditions, however, was the most helpful in terms of shaping my personal commitment to remain open in the face of interpersonal stress. Also such training gave me a linguistic orientation that enabled me to assimilate rapidly the linguistic elements of religion in this group's life. The academic study of the religious life of the American people will not move substantially ahead without many more of these analytic descriptions of what is beginning now in new or revised religious movements.

Second, it is my conviction upon completing this study that major theoretical and methodological solutions in the analytic description of religious behavior can be found in a dialectical presentation of the human "insides" and the institutional "outsides" at all points on the study of religion. This issue of reciprocity is at the heart of religious behavior. This is the self-evident reality to those who are "doing" a religion, which the intellectual traditions of the West have methodologically denied in the pursuit of a false consciousness of procedural objectivity. Such "objectivity", in fact, allows the scholar to treat religion as a "dead"

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reality, subject to anatomical autopsy or cultural archeology, but in most cases to lose oneself in a scholasticism of the parts of religious behavior without allowing its wholeness to emerge in one's own work. Participant-observation with its face-to-face continuing contact with the living reality of religion can correct this presupposition of "deadness" that afflicts many studies. A scholar may wish to assert the "wrongness" or "rightness" of certain symbolic assertions that a group makes or the logic of the implications they derive, but to presume this issue is closed by your procedure is to deny the reality under study, and to reduce it, beyond recognition by its participants or its usefulness to other scholars of religion. This is one of the reasons why recent religious studies have an historical accumulation of materials but little useful theoretical construction about religious behavior, i.e. theory useful to religious practitioners or to other students.

Third, this research experience suggested to me some specific other research that might be undertaken today.

1. We have so many historical and philological studies about religion that we must work for the next several years to rebalance these materials with studies of living religious groups. This, of course, should also focus attention on both major trans-national religious movements, and new emerging and even socially marginal religious groups. By so doing we might begin to correct theoretical and methological bias inherent in study of other cultures not committed to "modernization" and also provide empirical materials for testing many "modern" presuppositions about religion in the life of the human species.

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2. We have a few suggestive general models of religious phenomena and we have many excellent historical and literary studies of religious movements; we need a "middle-range" of theory that can connect and test these assertions and the specific studies. There is a fallacy of "misplaced concreteness" at work in many of our studies. Perhaps we wish in general in the human sciences to explain by prediction too specific a level of behavior. Instead we might work to show a narrowing range of alternates for a group or explain how their social interaction is exposing them to an increasingly wider range of alternates in their future. This would also presume that many religious people know what they are doing even if they don't express it in language which is in harmony with our cognitive basis for trying to study them.

3. The relation of non-ordinary experiences, realities, and reference points in religion is central and unavoidable in the description and analysis of religious behavior. This suggests that religious methods for contemplative experience might be a source of methodological invention for the academic study of religion. Also acts of religious celebration might be a source for suggesting general theoretical propositions for analytic induction about the function of religion in the general life of the human species. It might also suggest some forms of group experimentation which scholars of religion might sponsor for testing their general theories.

4. There is a need for a new kind of "reductionism" in the scientific study of religious behavior. Transcendence is a phenomena of the human species life that is expressed in forms not usually recognized as religious. If scholars of religion began to

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analytically focus their studies on the phenomena of transcendence out of the ordinary everyday realities of life then a new axis for describing and understanding religions, transcending social behaviors, and non-ordinary individual experiences could be pursued. Such studies would compare human behaviors and cultural projects not now usually compared. This form of reductionism would be "horizontal" not "vertical" in my proposal. It would be a matter of focusing the observers looking and listening with still the stress on synchronicity of theoretical models, methodological procedures and living religious groups for which the first three proposals in this list argues. Freudian psychoanalysis is not my model for this form of reductionism rather Zazen meditation. The latter suggests sitting there and paying attention to what you are experiencing, with increasingly relaxed and scrupulous attention to what is simply and complexly there. Most Western analytic methods instead have been used, whether intended or not, in the study of religion as a "cookie-cutter". The phenomena is seen as undifferentiated "dough" to which the transcendent observer deftly applied his analytical procedures like a good surgeon. The result is always by definition a successful procedure even if the "patient", i.e. religious reality, dies. Instead the new reduction would imply that the subject under study is the teacher to the observing student-scholar; who pauses from his or her busy round of activity to be refreshed, corrected and reestablished by an encounter with a reality, other than one's self. One that is granted, at least temporarily cognitive equality with the observing self.

Such studies of religious reality have much to contribute to a reorientation of our understanding of the life of the human species. A somewhat neglected task for most of us, but possibly rewarding for our general understanding of our planetary life as a species.

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